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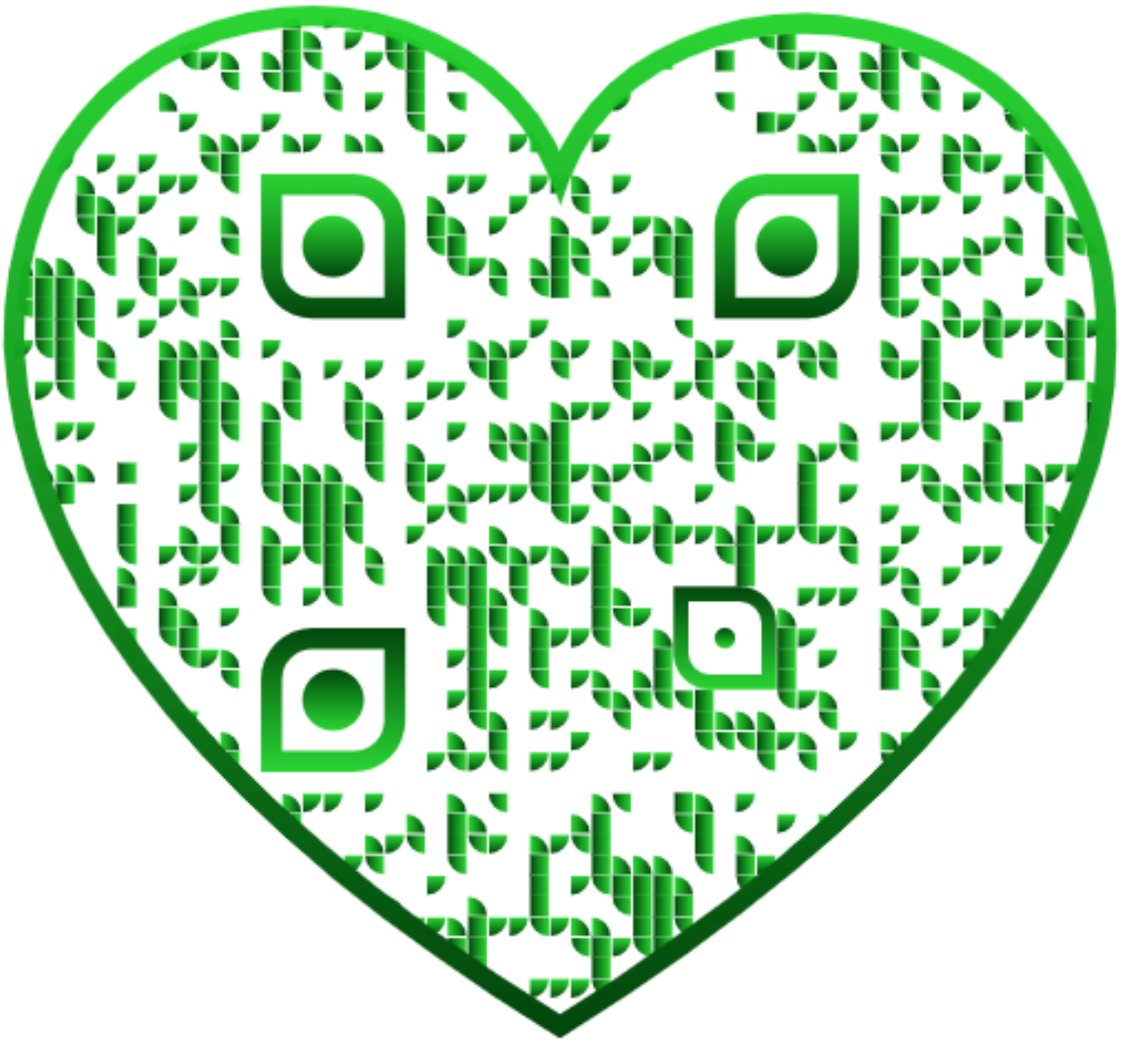

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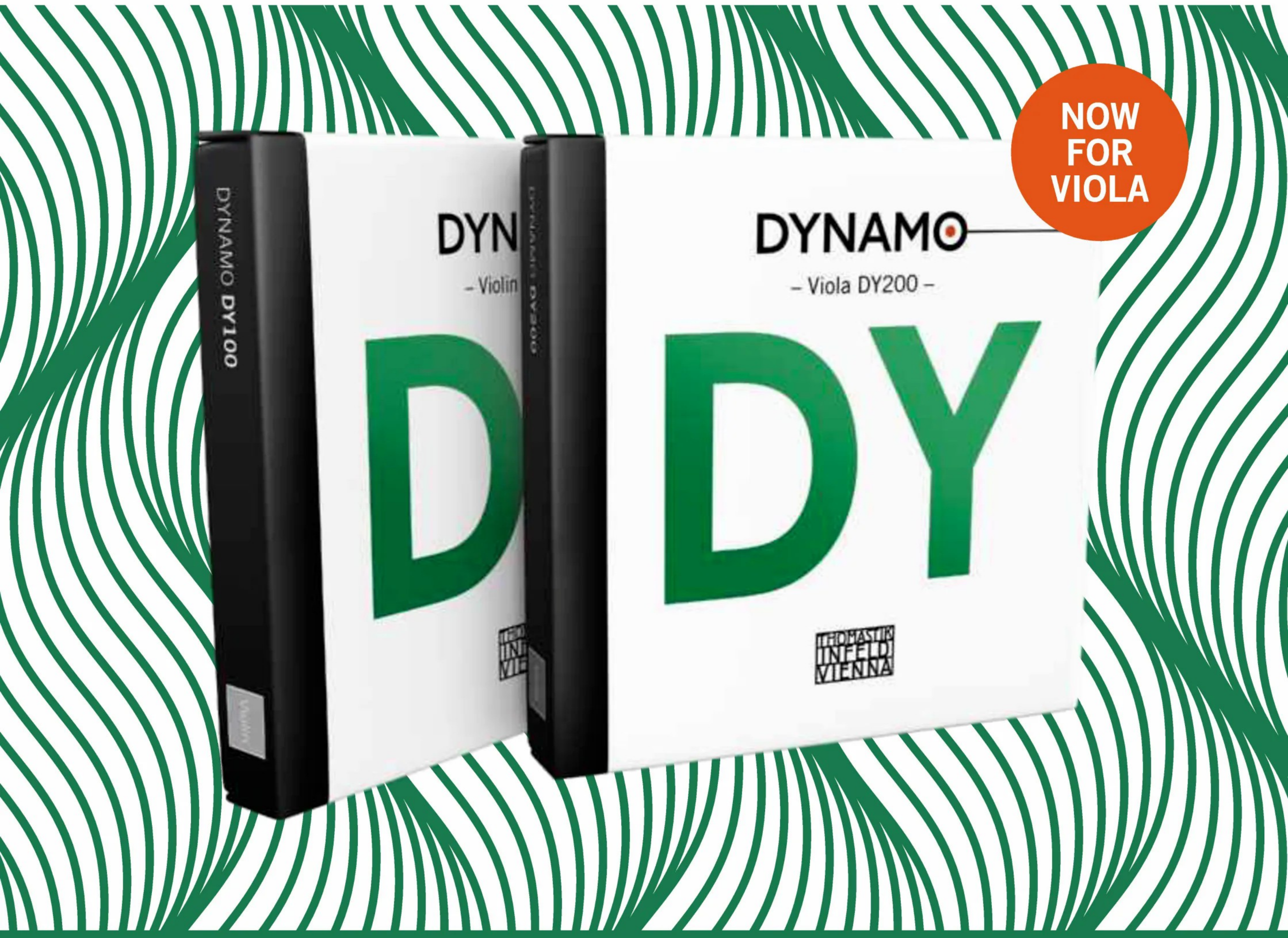

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Contents

VOL.135 ISSUE NO 1608 APRIL 2024

24
COVER STORY
Joshua Bell

44
Boris Pergamenschikow

EDITOR'S LETTER 7 CONTRIBUTORS 8 SOUNDPOST 10

FEATURES

24 **JOSHUA BELL**
The US violinist talks to *Pauline Harding* about his work with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, where he has been music director since 2011

32 **THE IMPROVISED CONCERTO**
Can an innovative composition help string players find the confidence to make their own kind of music? *Andrew Mellor* speaks to the originators to find out

36 **RICHARD OTTO GLÄSEL**
A master copyist, the German bow maker learnt his trade in France just before the First World War. *Gennady Filimonov* examines some of his finest works

42 **SESSION REPORT**
Emma Denton and Eoin Schmidt-Martin of the London-based Carducci Quartet tell *Tom Stewart* about their latest recording of Shostakovich

44 **BORIS PERGAMENSCHIKOW**
Oskar Falta examines the life and career of the Russian cellist and pedagogue who died 20 years ago this month, with reminiscences from former students

50 **CELLO BRIDGE DESIGN**
Could a radical new model of bridge bring improvements to the instrument's sound? *Sebastian Gonzalez* reveals the results of an acoustic investigation

36

Richard Otto Gläsel

FRONT

12 **ON THE BEAT**
News and analysis 12 / Premiere 16 / Competitions 18

19 **PRODUCTS**

20 **LIFE LESSONS** The memories and opinions of American violinist Tai Murray

21 **OPINION** Is there a lack of educational focus when it comes to practising pizzicato?

22 **POSTCARD FROM BEIJING** The 2023 Global Music Education League violin competition

REGULARS

55 **IN FOCUS** A 1759 violin by Joseph Marquès

58 **TRADE SECRETS** Making a fleur-de-lys decoration on the back of a Baroque instrument

62 **MY SPACE** Helsinki luthier Elina Kaljunen

64 **MAKING MATTERS** Bow maker Jacques Poullot explains the steps that go into identifying a bow

66 **MASTERCLASS** Gary Hoffman on playing the second and third movements of Beethoven's Cello Sonata no.5 in D major op.102

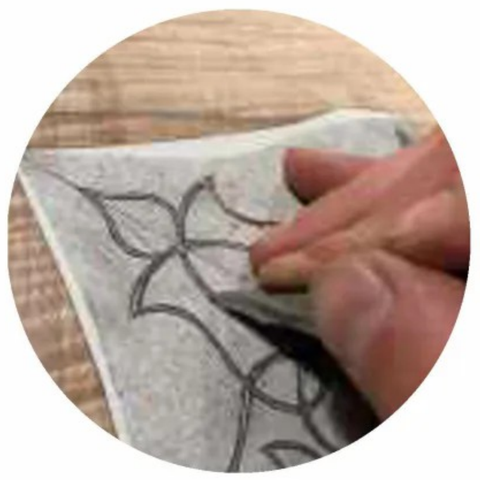
72 **TECHNIQUE** Cellist and singer Matthew Sharp on the connections between cello and voice

76 **REVIEWS**
Concerts 76 / Recordings 80 / Books 88

93 **FROM THE ARCHIVE** From April 1904

94 **SENTIMENTAL WORK** Violinist Elena Urioste on her love for Mel Bonis's Violin Sonata

LUTHERIE



55
In Focus

58
Trade Secrets

TEACHING AND LEARNING

66
Masterclass

72
Technique

MUSIC

76
Concerts

80
Recordings

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Editor's letter

As well as being one of the world's most celebrated violinists for more than three decades, Joshua Bell has since 2011 been the music director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (ASMF), a post that is very dear to his heart, as he tells Pauline Harding on page 24. This April he and the ASMF are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Neville Marriner, the much-loved British conductor who founded the London-based orchestra back in 1959. Bell speaks warmly about his relationship with the musicians of the ASMF, his love of conducting, and also about his upcoming Paganini recording.

Another anniversary that falls this April is 20 years since the death of Russian-born cellist and teacher Boris Pergamenschikow. He taught a whole generation of leading cellists including Nicolas Altstaedt, Claudio Bohórquez, Alban Gerhardt and Amit Peled. On page 44, these and other former students share their memories of this generous artist with Oskar Falta.

Ask most classically trained musicians to improvise and more often that not the reaction will be one of fear. It's no longer a part of traditional Western classical training but, like any skill, it can be acquired with practice, given the opportunity. Christina Åstrand, first concertmaster of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, and composer Signe Lykke have attempted to redress the balance by creating a violin concerto that incorporates many elements of improvisation. On page 32 they speak to Andrew Mellor about how they developed the project, and the new artistic freedom it has given some of the young players involved so far.

In lutherie this issue, on page 36 Gennady Filimonov tells the story of German bow maker Richard Otto Gläsel. This brilliant craftsman, trained in the Parisian school, was also a skilled copyist, but eventually fell victim to the economic depression in Germany between the two world wars. We also take a look at cello bridges on page 50: can redesigning their shape enhance the way an instrument responds and sounds? And in Trade Secrets on page 58 luthier Evan Davenport shares his method for creating a purfling fleur-de-lys design on the back of a double bass.

Emma Baker editor
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Cover photo Sebastian Madej

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Contributors

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(Trade Secrets, page 58)
is a gold medal-winning instrument maker. He studied at North Bennet Street School in Boston, MA. His instruments have won at the International Society of Bassists and Violin Society of America competitions. Since 2017 he has been working at Robertson and Sons in Albuquerque, NM.

OSKAR FALTA

(Boris Pergamenschikow, page 44)
studied at London's Royal Academy of Music, and earned his doctorate at the University of British Columbia in 2019. He now teaches cello at the Musikschule der Stadt Ulm in Germany.

GENNADY FILIMONOV

(Richard Otto Gläsel, page 36)
is a violinist and instrument dealer based in Seattle, where he is a member of the Seattle Symphony and founding member of the Odeon Quartet. He has performed on more than 850 soundtracks and is the owner of Filimonov Fine Violins.

SEBASTIAN GONZALEZ

(Cello bridge design, page 50)
is a physicist by training, who combines his technical expertise with his love of music, utilising computer simulations, artificial intelligence and hands-on experiments to unravel the mechanics behind the violin's unique sound.

JORDI PINTO

(In Focus, page 55)
is the current director of the Casa Parramon workshop, founded in Barcelona in 1897. His major passion is the study and investigation of Catalan and Spanish violin makers from the 18th century to the present day.

JACQUES POULLOT

(Making Matters, page 64)
trained as a bow maker in Mirecourt under Bernard Ouchard. He opened his own business in 1983. His bows have won several prizes at international competitions and since 2021 he has been an accredited bow expert at Dijon Court of Appeal.

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LETTER *of the* MONTH

TAKING A BACK STEP

I wholeheartedly agree with Alexandra Gorski's piece about the value of back-desk orchestral players (Opinion, March 2024). I've led a charmed life as a musician, been very lucky and worked tremendously hard. There have been national music festivals where I've sat in the middle or rear of the section, and always found it a rewarding and revelatory experience.

Recently, a colleague asked me to play substitute viola for the first time with the Seattle Symphony, which was essentially my hometown orchestra – the first one I'd listened to as a serious student and had heard many times. To be in the back of the section for that series of concerts really led me to think about what we front-stand players can learn from being in the rear of the section. Some observations follow.

First, it's more difficult to figure out the intentions of the conductor from further back. I hadn't realised just how much I relied on hearing intakes of breath and subvocalisations for indications of the tempo that the conductor wanted (rather than the one they're supposedly showing with the stick).

Second, it's really loud back there! Being just a few metres from the trombone section when playing a Shostakovich symphony is a visceral (and potentially hearing-damaging) experience. In the front, you've essentially got an entire section of sound shields behind you. Not so in the back.

Third, positioning is so important. If one cannot see where in the bow the front stand is playing, it becomes a game of 'telephone' where you're filtering the placement of the bow through your colleagues in the front – some of whom might have a different idea of where to play – and it leads to delays in decision-making that are not ideal.

Fourth, you realise just how important the second-chair player is. If you cannot see the principal, you must rely on their stand partner, who presumably is doing what the principal is doing. An assistant who is doing a good job of co-leading makes playing in the back much easier.

Finally, it's really difficult to hear spoken instructions from the front when you're in the back. If there's something important that needs to be passed back to the section, it should either be said loudly or, if that's not appropriate in the rehearsal situation, told to the next stand back with instructions to relay the word back to the section.

The back desks of the string section are just as valuable as the front

I learnt so much by being in the back of a first-rate orchestra for a week, and it informed how I would approach my job as an assistant in another first-rate orchestra. I'd recommend that any front-desk player take the opportunity to sit in the rear of their section no matter how experienced they are. There is much to be learnt back there!

CHARLES NOBLE
Portland, OR, US

YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS

Perhaps some readers of *The Strad* remember Frank Passa, the San Francisco violin and bow maker. My nine-year-old granddaughter came to visit me the other day and gave me a bow to examine. She said, 'Here is a gold-mounted Possum for you to look at.' Expertise can't begin too early, but kids certainly say some funny things.

JOSEPH GOLD
Piedmont, CA, US

IDENTITY CRISIS

It was interesting, but also disappointing, to read the March issue's piece about the growing difficulties for UK ensembles to tour to Europe (Analysis, March 2024). I don't know the exact ins and outs of policy but having lived and worked as a musician in London for nearly ten years, I know how disillusioned my British colleagues have become with the systems that used to support them. Many have left the industry entirely because of it. I am very lucky to be a dual national and therefore always have the possibility of returning to my home country if the effects of Brexit or lack of arts funding make my life too difficult, but my British friends do not have this option.

MICHAEL BLANN/GETTY

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS

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Part of the problem is that because this isn't negatively affecting European ensembles or musicians nearly as much as it is British musicians (at least not yet), the Europeans have no reason – other than sympathy – to go out of their way to help British musicians. But for the Brits this is unfortunately their new and inescapable reality. It is a complex and difficult problem, and I can only hope that there is light at the end of the tunnel for these very talented British musicians and ensembles.

ELIAS SUMMERS
London, UK

REACHING FOR THE STARS

I enjoyed Rachael Ridge's reflections on teaching 'late starters' to the violin (bit.ly/3VeMWdB). They reminded me of a lady who walked into my studio a few years ago with the firm intention of becoming a world-class cellist 'because I just saw Audrey Hepburn playing one in *Love in the Afternoon*'. Sad to say, she didn't last more than a few lessons, but at least it inspired me to watch this 1957 classic. Audrey (*right*) does indeed do a credible job as a cello student, although she exhibits a very pronated violinistic bow hold (a locked pinky is never a good thing). More worryingly, throughout the picture she has an awkward habit of resting the cello on various items of furniture, possibly doing terrible damage to the varnish – and there's a notorious scene where she transports the instrument in the passenger seat of her friend's car, with the neck sticking out of the sunroof. I wonder how many repairers in the 50s encountered smashed cello necks as a result!

PRISCILLA ROGERS
Bemidji, MN, US

ONLINE COMMENT

In honour of what would have been Jascha Heifetz's 103rd birthday on 2 February, musicians and Heifetz enthusiasts from around the world shared their appreciation for his unique playing and astonishing legacy bitly.ws/3eshM

GEORGE SARANT He had a unique gift that always put him a step ahead of everyone else. He could max out a performance to the highest level, yet you always felt he had enough left to take it even higher.

JOHN HUXLEY-TRAVIS Elgar said that he didn't recognise his Violin Concerto when Heifetz played it.

AL SMITH I heard him play the Brahms Concerto with the St Louis Symphony. It was magnificent. Such power, both in the music and in Heifetz's unmatched playing.

ORSEN PHOTO DARREN PELLEGRINO

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ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

1 How a bespoke solution helped violist Daniel Orsen (*below*) with an immovable right index finger bitly.ws/3esaU

2 Setting up the left hand: a guide for beginner violinists bitly.ws/3esb4

3 The road to Wigmore: cellist Sterling Elliott's practice diary bitly.ws/3esbd

PODCAST OF THE MONTH

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Episode #107: back to basics with cellist Gabriel Schwabe bitly.ws/3esic

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On the beat

News and events from around the world this month

Read all the breaking news in the string world online www.thestrad.com

Diverse matters

A new report highlights the experience of LGBTQ+ musicians in the UK's orchestral landscape, revealing that discrimination is still all too common in such environments

By Peter Somerford

A performance by Her Ensemble, the UK's first orchestra centring on women and gender-diverse musicians

TOM LOVATT

The latest report from the first ever UK Musicians' Census reveals significant issues facing LGBTQ+ musicians around discrimination, sexual harassment and mental and physical wellbeing. The LGBTQ+ Musicians Insight Report (bit.ly/4bO1xCu) was produced by the Musicians' Union (MU) and the charities Help Musicians and Come Play with Me. It draws on data from the Musicians' Census 2023, which surveyed nearly 5,900 musicians, 1,090 of whom are from LGBTQ+ communities. Over a third of these LGBTQ+ respondents (37 per cent) had experienced or witnessed discrimination based on their sexuality while working as a musician, yet only 27 per cent reported it. Over half of trans respondents had experienced discrimination based on their gender identity, and almost half of all LGBTQ+ respondents (44 per cent) had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment.

The report also identifies high levels of poor mental and physical wellbeing among LGBTQ+ musicians, with 43 per cent reporting poor mental wellbeing compared with 30 per cent of musicians in the overall Census sample who reported experiencing the same. John Shortell, the MU's head of equality, diversity and inclusion, is particularly concerned by this finding, which he says reflects both the insecurities of freelance employment and also LGBTQ+ musicians' experience of discrimination and feeling that they can't always be open about their sexuality or gender identity with the people they work with. 'We already know from wider society that hiding part of your identity has a massive impact on your mental health,' Shortell says. 'People feeling they can't be themselves at work, or suffering high levels of discrimination, only adds to the impact that the employment and financial insecurities of being a freelance musician can have on mental wellbeing.' While the majority of LGBTQ+ musicians surveyed reported that they are open about their sexuality with at least some of the people they work with, 16 per cent did not feel able to be open with anyone they work with.

Although the report includes anonymised comments from some respondents working in the classical music sector, the data is not genre-specific. However, Tony Ereira, director of Come Play with Me, a non-profit music organisation that supports the career development of marginalised communities and especially LGBTQ+ musicians, feels there is work to be done with inclusion in the classical sector. 'In some genres, such as electronic music, there is excellent diversity of voices that I don't see across other genres, including classical

'Hiding part of your identity has a massive impact on your mental health' – *John Shortell, head of equality, diversity and inclusion, Musicians' Union*

music,' he says. 'It would be great to identify some of that good practice and share it between genres.' Shortell adds: 'Many of the diversity issues in the orchestral sector come from the mindset of hiring for a cultural "fit" rather than a cultural "add", which means looking for someone to slot into an existing framework instead of considering what new perspective that person could bring to the organisation. This goes beyond the players, to the management and boards.'

In some practical aspects of orchestral work such as dress codes, dressing rooms and the use of inclusive language, there is still progress to be made, says one non-binary musician who is a member of Her Ensemble, the UK's first orchestra centring on women and gender-diverse musicians. 'I get misgendered in other work settings all the time, even when I tell people what my pronouns are,' they say. 'And when orchestra managers address the "men of the orchestra" or "ladies of the orchestra", I think, "What about me? Where do I go?" With dress codes there has been a small amount of progress in the sector, for example with those orchestras that use "option 1" and "option 2" for their dress codes, instead of saying men wear this and women wear that. But even though the rules on paper may be option 1 or option 2, if you go outside of the stereotypically assigned clothing it can be difficult and you face a lot of people staring at you, saying things.' The musician credits Her Ensemble with influencing other orchestras to change their dress codes and attitudes, but says: 'Organisations can professionally and officially agree with more inclusive policies but then actually they talk badly about these things, or they think it's silly or ridiculous that they're doing something different to include other people.'

The report also identifies a significant pay gap between non-LGBTQ+ musicians who earn all their income through music and those who identify as LGBTQ+ musicians, with the latter making £4,000 a year less on average. This pay gap widens to almost £10,000 for trans musicians.

Despite the challenging conditions for some LGBTQ+ musicians, 84 per cent of respondents in the report said it is likely that they will still be working in the music industry in five years' time. 'This is encouraging,' says Shortell, 'and it's even more reason for the industry to come together and think how we can remove barriers so that people can feel they can be themselves at work, and take the necessary steps to rid discrimination and harassment from workplaces.'

JULIEN MIGNOT

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ébène Quartet appoints new cellist bit.ly/3IxuRQp

The Ébène Quartet has announced the appointment of Yuya Okamoto, 29 (*far left*), as its new cellist, following the departure of Raphaël Merlin who has played with the ensemble for almost 25 years. The quartet posted on social media that Okamoto 'is not only an extraordinary musician, but also brings a lot of happiness to our group'. Okamoto performs on a 1682 cello made by Giovanni Grancino.

London Sinfonietta receives £100,000 grant bit.ly/49EwlUm

The Cockayne Grants for the Arts Programme has awarded £100,000 to the London Sinfonietta. The grant will fund a series of eight significant commissions, to be built into its future programmes and enter the repertoire of other ensembles around the world. The choice of composers aims to be representative and inclusive, celebrating the diversity of London.

Renaud Capuçon awarded Officer's Medal by Macron bit.ly/3Iezz5q

French violinist Renaud Capuçon has been awarded the Officer's Medal in the National Order of Merit, signifying a promotion to the second rank in the Order. The ceremony took place at the Élysée Palace in Paris, France, with the medal bestowed by French president Emmanuel Macron. Capuçon previously received the Knight of the French National Order of Merit in 2011, became a Knight of the French Legion of Honour in 2016, and was presented with the Officer's Medal in the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture in 2021.

Do you have a topical story concerning the string music world? Email us at **thestrad@thestrad.com**

OBITUARIES

SALLY THOMAS

US violinist and teacher Sally Thomas has died at the age of 92. She was best known as the teaching assistant of Ivan Galamian at the Juilliard School, where she was a faculty member from 1961.

Born in Minot, North Dakota, Thomas completed both her bachelor's and master's degrees at the Juilliard School. Among her teachers were Galamian, Josef Gingold, Edouard Dethier, Louis Persinger and Hans Letz.

Thomas taught at the Meadowmount School of Music from 1960, a year later joining the Juilliard faculty in the pre-college and college divisions. Among her students were violinists James Ehnes, Odin Rathnam, Anat Malkin Almani, Ingrid Matthiessen, Stephanie Chase, Robert Canetti, Robert Schumitzky and Todd Phillips. She wrote the introduction to the 2013 edition of Galamian's *Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching*.

In 2013 Meadowmount established the Sally G. Thomas Fellowship in recognition of her contribution to the school, to be awarded annually to an outstanding violin student poised for a significant career. Thomas also served on the board of directors for the Society for Strings Inc.

ANTONIO LYSY

The cellist and pedagogue Antonio Lysy has died aged 60. In his work, Lysy aimed to showcase the versatility of the cello's voice, from Baroque to electric, performing in projects that illustrated his diverse interests in music.

Born in 1963, Lysy was the son of violinist Alberto Lysy and Benedetta Origo. Antonio studied cello at the Menuhin School before embarking on an international performing career. He recorded extensively for CBC Radio, BBC Radio, Classic FM and other European radio networks.

As an educator, Lysy was a professor at McGill University in Montreal for 15 years, as well as a visiting professor at the International Menuhin Music Academy in Switzerland for many years. He became professor of cello at the Herb Alpert School of Music, University of California Los Angeles, in 2003.

He founded the Incontri in Terra di Siena Chamber Music Festival in Tuscany, which has been held annually since its inception in 1989. Lysy was also the co-founder of the NUME Academy and Festival in Cortona, and taught at the Heifetz International Music Institute in Virginia and the Toronto Summer Music Festival in Canada.

HANNELE ANGERVO-SEGERSTAM

The Finnish violinist and educator Hannele Angervo-Segerstam has died at the age of 80. Born on 19 August 1943 in Mikkeli, she studied at the Sibelius Academy throughout her teens and went on to study at the Paris Conservatoire for two years. Following this, she moved to the US to study at the Juilliard School with Ivan Galamian and Louis Persinger from 1963 to 1965.

Angervo-Segerstam won first prize in the Kuopio National Violin Competition and won the Harriet Cohen medal in 1967, which launched her solo career, during which she premiered the works of numerous Finnish composers.

Throughout her career Angervo-Segerstam served as concertmaster of the Finnish National Opera and the Radio Symphony Orchestra, as well as a professor at the Sibelius Academy. She worked with artists such as Salonen, Berglund, Saariaho and Lindberg, and made several collaborations with Lutosławski and Kagel.

PHILIPPE ARRII-BLACHETTE

French violinist Philippe Arrii-Blachette died on 30 December. He was 87. He studied at the Paris Conservatoire, where he won a violin and chamber music prize and attended masterclasses with Jacques Thibaud and Henryk Szeryng. He was also a prizewinner at the Mexico International Competition.

As a soloist, Arrii-Blachette performed widely in Europe and Latin America. In 1992 he formed the Sillages Ensemble, raising the profile of contemporary music in his home of Brittany and beyond, including performances in Rome, Geneva and Buenos Aires.

He produced 80 musical programmes for television between 1970 and 1974. He performed in the 2E2M ensemble from 1978 to 1983 and became director of the France-Culture Musical Programme at Radio France from 1985 to 1988.

As an educator, Arrii-Blachette was professor of violin and chamber music at the Municipal Conservatory of Pantin from 1976 to 1981, as well as director of the National School of Music of Romainville, in Seine-Saint-Denis, from 1975 to 1995. Though Parisian by birth, Arrii-Blachette settled in Brest, and served as director of the Brest Conservatory from 1995 to 2002.

RICHARD ADAMS

US violinist Richard 'Dick' Adams died on 13 December at the age of 94. He was assistant concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra (formerly Minnesota Symphony) from 1956 to 1991.

Born in 1929, Adams began studying the violin at the age of six with his father, who was also a violinist in the Minnesota Orchestra. At 14 he made his solo debut with the orchestra.

He went on to study under Ivan Galamian at the Juilliard School. Following his studies, Adams won the concertmaster position with the Dallas Symphony but military service intervened. Instead he played with the Air Force orchestra for four years, performing as soloist around the US. He then went on to serve as concertmaster with the American Ballet Theater in New York.

Adams returned to Minnesota in 1956 to take up his position of assistant concertmaster with the orchestra there, performing in numerous venues in the state. In addition he taught many pupils at the University of Minnesota, Hamline University, and privately. He retired from the Minnesota Orchestra in 1991.

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Original image of Anne Akiko Meyers by Dina Douglass

HOLO VICTORY: The musicians of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande appear in the first ever holographic symphony concert on 25 January. The movements of the 73 musicians were recorded using motion capture software during a performance of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The screening took place as part of the twelfth edition of artgenève, the art fair held annually in Geneva, Switzerland. In the planned next stage of the project, viewers will be able to interact with and wander through the orchestra via a virtual reality headset. A video of the making of the concert can be viewed at bit.ly/3IcmA3V. Photo: Magali Dougados

PREMIERE *of the* MONTH

Love is all around

Dvořák's Cello Concerto is the inspiration behind a new piece in the genre

COMPOSER **Daniel Perttu**
WORK ***The Guises of Love* for cello and orchestra**
ARTISTS **Mark Kosower (vc) Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra/Charles Latshaw**
DATE **6 April 2024**
PLACE **Avalon Theatre, Grand Junction, CO, US** bitly.ws/3dCBs

Daniel Perttu

Mark Kosower

'When I met with Mark Kosower to discuss the concerto, we ended up talking about how much we both loved the Dvořák Cello Concerto,' says American composer Daniel Perttu. 'So I ended up deciding to write a concerto that followed the Romantic spirit of Dvořák's work, but with a 21st-century perspective.' The subject matter of Perttu's new cello concerto was also influenced by Dvořák's piece. 'His concerto was in part inspired by an unrequited love. I wanted to use the theme of love but put my own spin on it.' The concerto's name, *The Guises of Love*, refers to Perttu's aim to show the different facets of love. 'It's not just about infatuation, but also the darker sides of love such as unrequited love, or grief and loss.'

Instead of quoting directly from Dvořák's piece, Perttu's work takes the character and spirit from the concerto as an influence. 'The first movement is dark and brooding like the Dvořák,' he says. 'It starts with low strings and a bassoon solo. But unlike Dvořák's, mine turns more heroic.' The second movement is 'an outpouring of grief. It's melodically driven and uses stark contrasts between dark, minor harmonies, followed immediately by related major melodies. The harmonies really pull but don't break the tonal system.' Perttu also utilises the pentatonic scale, often used by Dvořák, in this movement. As a release from the intense second movement, the third 'cleanses the palate', he says. 'It has a lot of rhythmic intensity, semiquaver energy and syncopation. It is redemptive while also having darker shades.

'When I listen to the Dvořák, I'm in another place completely,' says Perttu. 'And so, with this piece, I wanted to write something that helps people to escape to a world beyond the ordinary.'

PERTTU PHOTO DEREK BUCK; KOSOWER PHOTO LIM JONG JIN

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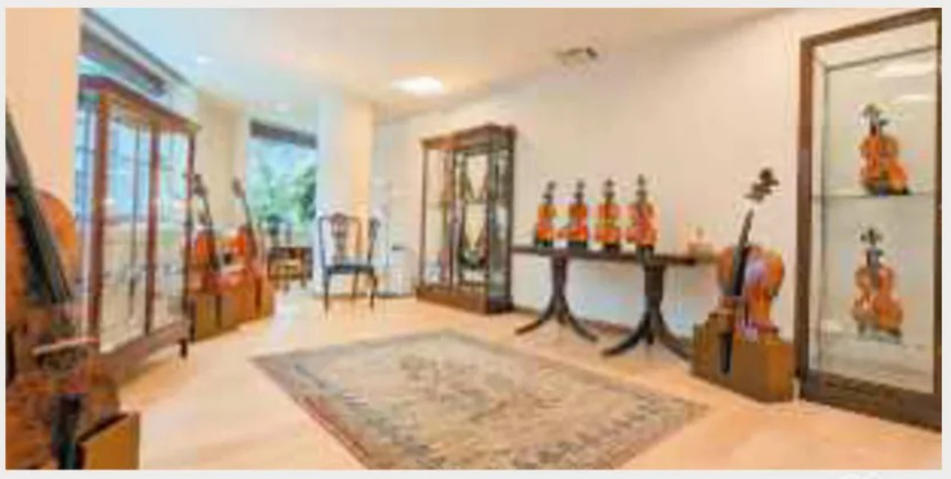

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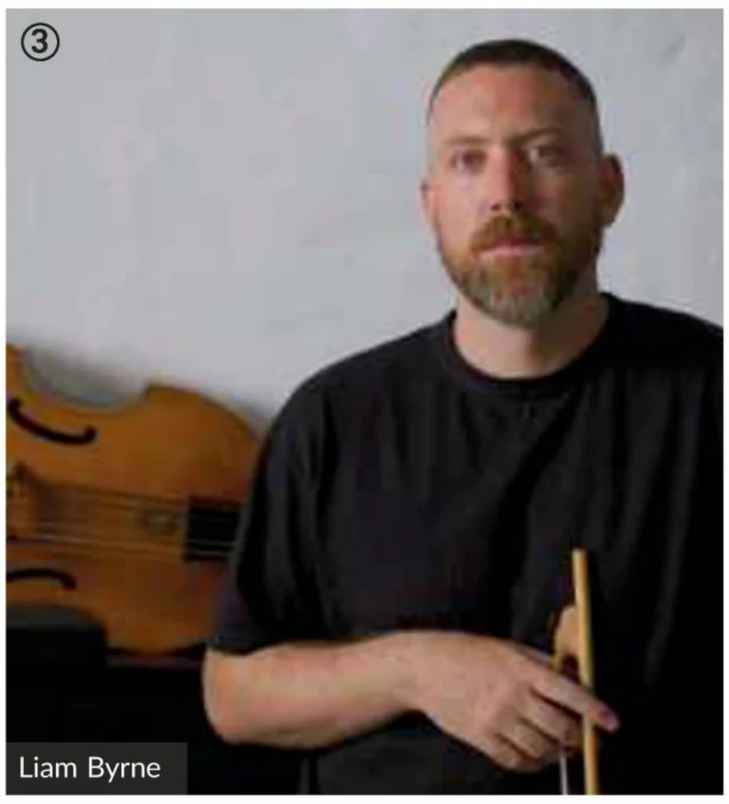
COMPETITIONS



❶ South Korean violinist **Do Gyung (Anna) Im**, 25, has been awarded first prize at the **Stuttgart International Violin Competition** in Stuttgart, Germany, receiving €30,000, the loan of a 1746 Giovanni Battista Guadagnini violin, and concert engagements. Second prize of €15,000 was awarded to violinist Ruslan Talas from Kazakhstan, 25, and third prize of €10,000 went to US violinist Matthew Hakkarainen, 23.

❷ Dutch violinist **Salomé Bonnema**, 22, has won the **Netherlands Violin Competition** in Utrecht, Netherlands, receiving the €12,000 Oskar Back prize. Second prize of €6,000 went to Dutch violinist Kira van der Woerd, 18, along with the €1,500 prize for the best performance of the commissioned work, while third prize of €4,000 and the audience award of €1,000 went to Dutch violinist Enzo Kok, 21.

❸ British viola da gamba player **Liam Byrne** has been awarded the **Glenn Gould Bach Fellowship** of €70,000. The fellowship is awarded every two years by the city of Weimar to selected musicians to realise ambitious musical media projects on the music of Bach and the Baroque period. Byrne's project will focus on the rare music of the English lyra viol repertoire from the early 17th century.

❹ Russian cellist **Anastasia Kobekina**, 29, has been selected for the 2024 **Leonard Bernstein Award** of €10,000 by the Schleswig-Holstein Music Festival in Germany. The award recognises young musical talent, and has been previously won by violinists Erik Schumann, Charles Yang and David Aaron Carpenter, and cellists Alisa Weilerstein, Leonard Elschenbroich and Kian Soltani.

FORTHCOMING COMPETITIONS & AWARDS

The Lionel Tertis and Cecil Aronowitz International Viola Competitions in Gateshead, UK, for violists aged 18 and under (Aronowitz) and 19–30 (Tertis). First prize £5,000 **Deadline** 10 May; competition 19–25 January 2025 **Web** bitly.ws/3ei8a

International Cello Competition in Bratislava, Slovakia, for cellists aged 30 and under. First prize €3,000 **Deadline** 15 May; competition 6–12 September **Web** bitly.ws/3edaB

Marie Cantagrill International Violin Competition in Mas-d'Azil, France, for violinists of all ages. First prize €5,000. **Deadline** 31 May; competition 4–7 July **Web** concoursmariecantagrill.com

APPOINTMENTS

- Israeli cellist **Zvi Plesser** and US cellist **Zlatomir Fung** are to join the cello faculty at the Juilliard School in autumn 2024
- German violist **Florian Richter** has been appointed viola professor at the Franz Liszt University of Music in Weimar
- Chinese cellist **Sihao He** is joining the Tianjin Juilliard School's cello faculty and the Shanghai Quartet
- Canadian cellist **Matthew Christakos** will become the New York Philharmonic's new associate principal cellist

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PHOTO CLEMENS HANSSON. KOBEKINA PHOTO LUSINE PEPANYAN

CELLO CASE

Worth its weight

Gewa reveals its lightest cello case yet

Gewa's new High Performance Carbon 2.7 cello case is now the lightest in the company's cello range. To offer both lightness and strength, the case is made of high-performance carbon fibre using Japanese technology. The 2.7kg case is 200g lighter weighs 200g less than Gewa's previous lightest model. To reduce the weight further, the case's interior is lined with a thin foam layer instead of fabric. 'It reduces weight but is still protective and won't scratch anything,' says the brand's marketing manager Jan Linda.

Various features are new to Gewa's entire range, such as the magnetic carbon lock on the adjustable neck strap. The case's six external locks are also new. 'The player just needs to press them to lock and unlock the case. So it's very easy and comfortable to use,' says Linda. Finally, instead of utilising a separate seal to close the case, one shell fits over the other. This is in line with Gewa's larger goal to make the overall design 'very clean and simple, while also being comfortable.'

Inside the case, four velour-lined foam pads suspend the instrument at the bottom and top. Another four velcro-lined foam pads are positioned along the edge of the cello to allow for a close fit. Four additional, thicker pads are supplied with the case, which players can replace themselves 'to fit the size of their cello perfectly,' says Linda. The case also features two magnetic bow holders, two leather handles, two back straps and an accessory pocket. It comes in black, grey and metallic dark blue.

'It's not only one of the lightest cases in the market,' Linda adds, 'We wanted to ensure that among the absolute lightest cases, it is also the sturdiest one. Both the material and the new technology are extremely special.'

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R.C. Williams has released a cello version of its Bass Buggie. It is used to pull and roll the instrument along instead of carrying it, reducing strain and risk of injury. The design is almost identical to the bass version and it can be used with the cello either in or out of its case. The cello is placed on its side and strapped in at the neck.

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Life lessons

Tai Murray

The US violinist on finding your voice and the transition from student to professional

It was my teacher in Indiana, when I was aged between 9 and 14, that gave me the building blocks of who I am as a player today. If I had to sum up his approach it would be: get all of it done and don't leave any stone unturned. I remember him once telling me, 'You are too young to play out of tune!' He also showed me the amount of dedication this craft takes, and he demonstrated it in his own approach while also requiring it of his students. I then began studying at Indiana University with Franco Gulli. He was a great teacher and a very special human being. One of the things I took from him was the importance of score study. It's not good enough just to know your part; you really have to know everything that's going on around you.

I sometimes had marathon three-hour lessons with Shmuel Ashkenasi. I was transitioning into adulthood so he talked a lot about making decisions, and stressed the importance of choosing your own path rather than just waiting for what comes your way. Making a choice helps you create direction, which in turn helps you musically. My goal of becoming a soloist was always very clear to me. The challenge was turning that into reality.

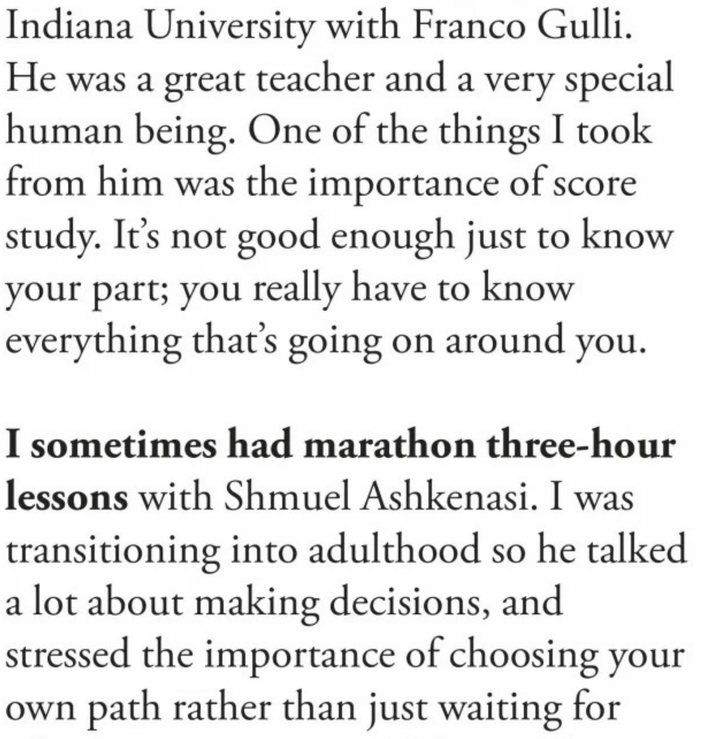
There is space for everyone in this industry

Going from studying at Juilliard to doing only professional work was definitely a bumpy transition. Being at an institution is like being under an umbrella. And now as a teacher, I realise even more how much of a bubble it is. When that umbrella is gone, you get rained on a lot. You need to learn how to navigate that new world and know who you are. There was a learning curve but because the goal was very clear, all I had to do was just get on with it.

I would urge young musicians to keep asking themselves 'why?' Why are you playing this piece; why are you making this connection with this person; why do you want to be a musician? The more you answer these questions, the more solid you can feel in your professional goals. I also think that learning how to deal with frustration in a mature way is crucial to achieving those goals.

Sometimes I get the feeling that classical musicians have to apologise for being creative. I don't think we should. The goal should never be to hurt anyone, but it also can't be that everyone should love what you do. This doesn't allow for the full gamut of human emotion, which is what we're dealing with as players. I also believe there is space for everyone in this industry. There are eight billion people on this planet, so there is an audience for everyone. It's up to the player to bring something that someone wants to listen to. So don't sit around and think – go and find your audience!

INTERVIEW BY RITA FERNANDES



An early publicity shot of Tai Murray

MAIN PHOTO GABY MERZ. INSET PHOTO ROBIN HOLLAND

THE PROBLEM WITH PIZZICATO

Perfecting bowing is a lifelong quest for string players – but what about pizzicato? Cellist Davina Shum advocates setting aside some dedicated practice time to this neglected technique

String players certainly have their work cut out in terms of mastering the numerous bowing techniques available. To conquer the versatility and flexibility of the bow is a lifelong quest, the end of which is never really reached. Heck, even learning to hold the thing can prove troublesome, as anyone who teaches beginners can attest.

But how many string players can say they've dedicated the same amount of time honing their pizzicato skills? When we embark on a practice session, there is plenty of emphasis on starting with simple tasks, such as open-string tone exercises, not to mention the inevitability of scales – but it's all with the bow. It almost sounds silly to suggest otherwise. In fact, I can hear my inner (exasperated) teacher saying, 'Yes, of course it's with the bow!'

Most of our repertoire requires us to put hair to string, so it's understandable that we need to ensure we are well versed in everything – flawless legato to make Ševčík proud, tremendous tremolo to withstand any Bruckner symphony, ricochet that evokes the equine trotting of the *William Tell* overture and so on. Additionally, we need to invest the time to ensure we can do all of this in a sustainable way without injury, so it's only natural that we string players are usually found with bow in hand.

However, string players would benefit from at least a bit of dedicated practice time on pizzicato. As beginners, we often start out plucking our first notes, before graduating to making 'bunny' shapes with the right hand (the two middle fingers touching the thumb in a curved shape, the other two fingers sticking up) and progressing to pencils, sticks and then fractional bows before arco playing seemingly takes over our lives. Continuing our education, we learn to transition from arco to pizzicato seamlessly without dropping our bow in order to play a few plucked notes before switching back. We might even come across a piece of repertoire that is wholly pizzicato, such as the 'Playful Pizzicato' movement from Britten's *Simple Symphony*, or the third movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony no.4 – even then, it's seen as a novelty.

I recall my first rehearsal with the Southbank Sinfonia when I moved to the UK in 2013. We were preparing the last movement of Beethoven's 'Eroica' Symphony, where the unison string section introduces the pizzicato theme. I didn't give it much thought beyond the notes, until the rehearsal leader stopped and said, 'Let's try that again, and can we try to hold back slightly? Remember, pizzicato always has a tendency to rush.' Despite my being heavily jetlagged, that phrase stuck with me – why was I only hearing about this now, as a postgraduate musician?

The tempo leans forward, causing a cataclysmic avalanche of notes

The more I thought about it, the more I realised how true that was. With a bow in hand, we focus so much on the response of the string and the level of attack required to make the string speak as we wish. With pizzicato, the sound is immediate. We pluck the string and continue, but forget to take the time that comes invariably with arco playing. In doing so, the tempo leans forward, causing a cataclysmic avalanche of notes amid cries of, 'I can't pluck this fast!'

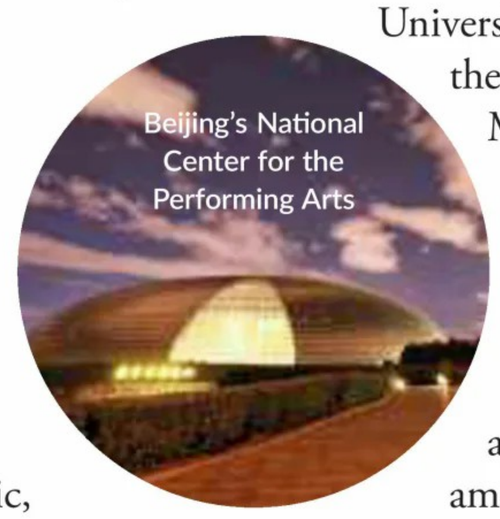
I have encountered numerous instances of rushing pizzicato in my professional career, and it's a maddening feeling of push-and-pull between members of an ensemble at times. To maintain a steady tempo, one must consciously hold back, subdivide and make sure the immediacy of plucking notes doesn't get out of control. I've had to pick up the subtle nuances of playing pizzicato while on the job. I wonder if players would be interested in implementing pizzicato both in their daily practice and within lessons with students – in order to treat it in the same way that we do the bowed tone exercises (among other things) that have been instilled in us.

Auspicious beginnings

The first violin edition of the Global Music Education League competition took place in Beijing following a four-year delay due to the pandemic. Emma Baker travelled to China to hear the finals

Winter in Beijing is bone-cold; the locals go about in long padded coats and teddy-bear hats, or zip around the busy streets on scooters and bicycles, their hands tucked into built-in mittens attached to their handlebars. Heavy plastic fringes hang down from doorways to shelter the interior from the bite of the wind. But the low winter sun sparkles through the ice-blue air and the colours on the buildings seem to glow. This huge city was once infamously choked by pollution, but since the pandemic, it has been working hard to clean up its act and feels like a place reborn.

One of the many other things that has re-emerged, post-pandemic, is the annual Global Music Education League (GMEL) competition. The very first edition, for piano, was held in May 2019, just before the world was stopped in its tracks by Covid. After a four-year hiatus, the inaugural violin edition took place from 3 to 13 November 2023.


Beijing's National Center for the Performing Arts

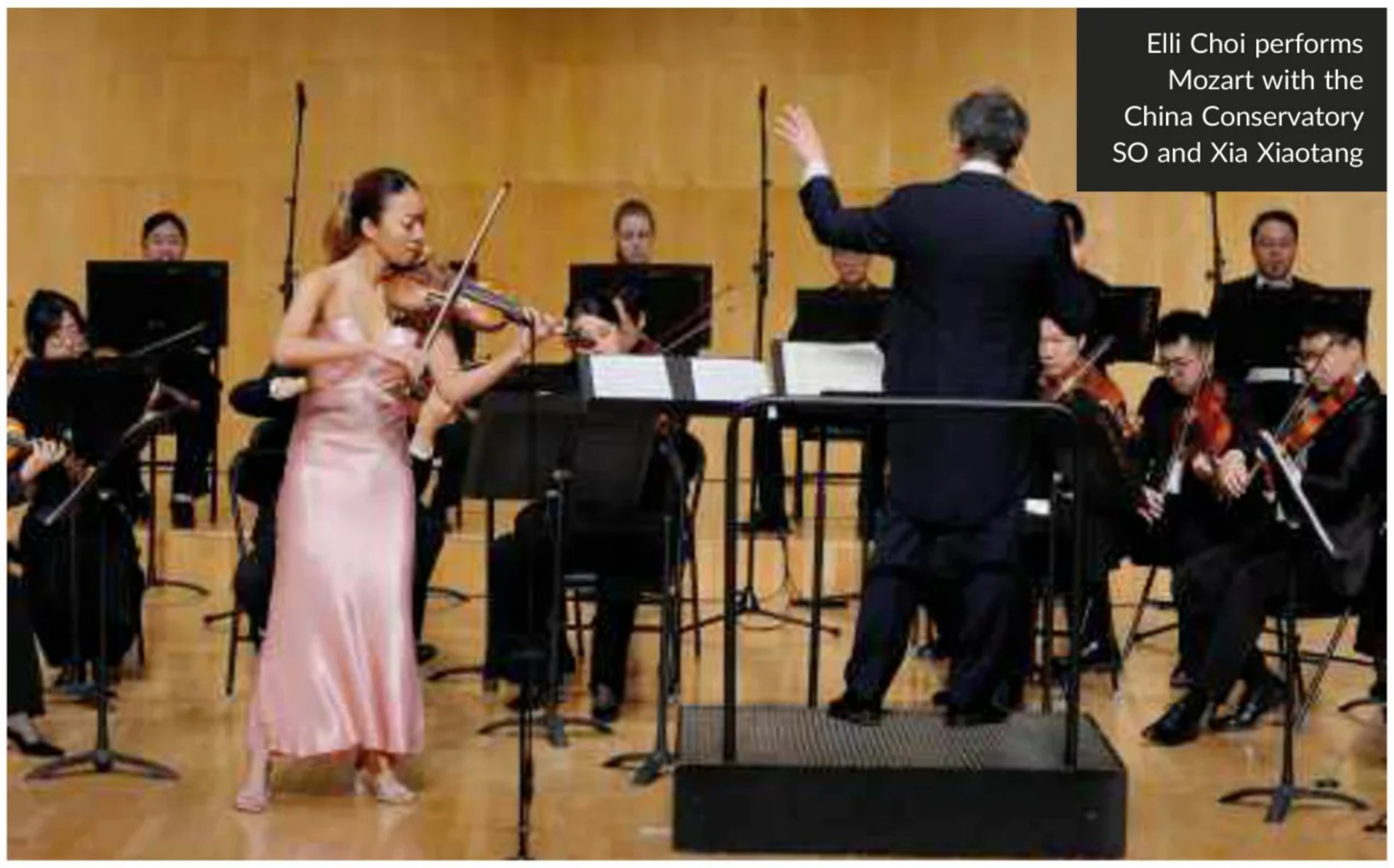
The GMEL, the organisation behind the competition, was set up in 2017 by Professor Liguang Wang, composer and then-president of the China Conservatory of Music, in partnership with the University of the Arts Helsinki, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, NY). Its goal, according to its mission statement, is 'to foster global music education' and 'build a world-class academic community', among other things.

For this first violin edition, the GMEL assembled an impressive international jury comprising Bin Huang (chair), Giovanni Angeleri, Friedemann Eichhorn, Lorenz Nasturica-Herschcowici, Mariusz Patyra, Lucie Robert, Joel Smirnoff, Weidong Tong and Pavel Vernikov. Equally impressive was the fact that the Philadelphia Orchestra would be accompanying the concertos in the final, marking the 50th anniversary of its first visit to China in 1973. 'It is a great demonstration of cultural exchange,' Wang told me. Perhaps what stood out most, though, was the prize money – a potentially life- and career-changing $100,000 for the first prize winner.

I arrived in Beijing to hear the first round of the finals on 11 November, when six finalists, whittled down from 20 international competitors, were required to play a Mozart concerto from a choice of nos.3, 4 or 5 accompanied by the China Conservatory Symphony Orchestra. This and previous heats took place in the state-of-the-art concert hall at the China Conservatory of Music in the north of the city.

First to play was Angela Sin Ying Chan, 26, one of two Chinese finalists, both of whom played the Fourth Concerto in D major. She performed with a sweet and confident tone, but suffered from being first on – the opening tempo dragged and she never quite regained her momentum. This clearly didn't go unnoticed by Chaowen Luo, 22, who followed after having a word with conductor Xia Xiaotang, briefly beating time. It made all the difference, as his performance came to life in a much more three-dimensional way.

Third on was Elli Choi, 22, from the US, with the only account of Mozart's Concerto no.3 in G major. From the start she was impressive. Her phrasing was thoughtfully shaped, and every note was imbued with meaning. It was a performance I'd have been happy to have paid to hear. Another standout was her compatriot Joshua Brown, 24, who chose the Fifth Concerto in A major. It was a confident and elegant account.



Elli Choi performs Mozart with the China Conservatory SO and Xia Xiaotang

The two other competitors, 23-year-old SooBeen Lee from South Korea and 22-year-old Risa Hokamura from Japan also chose to play Concerto no.4 – they were both musical and competent, and I preferred Lee's rendition, but by the fourth hearing of the same piece my somewhat jetlagged ears were finding it hard to distinguish between the finer points of interpretation.

It wouldn't be much of a spoiler to say that at this point the two Americans stood head and shoulders above the pack. Both are seasoned contestants – most recently, Choi was one of the prizewinners in the 2022 Kreisler competition, and Brown in the 2022 contest in Indianapolis. They were also both playing exceptional instruments – Brown a Nicolò Amati c.1635–40, and Choi a 1698 Matteo Gofriller. So it was no surprise when they were both selected to play in the final, alongside the musical Luo. At that point, Choi was my clear favourite, and her poise and professionalism were particularly impressive given that she had been ill with food poisoning (according to one of the jury members) and had only just got back on her feet.

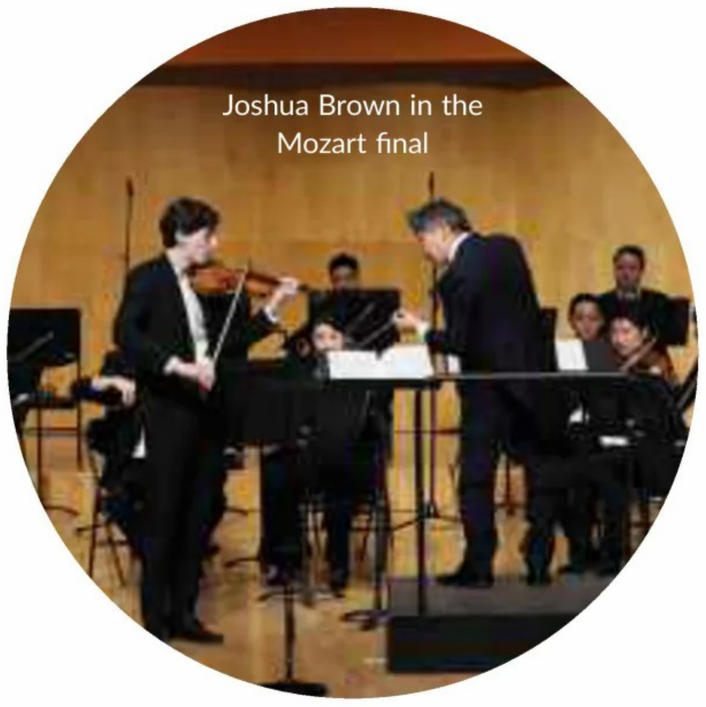
The actual final took place two days later in the packed concert hall of Beijing's magnificent National Center for the Performing Arts. This otherworldly building – known as The Egg – was opened in 2007 in the heart of Beijing, close to Tiananmen Square and the 15th-century walled imperial palace complex the Forbidden City.

The finalists had, thankfully, picked three different concertos from a choice of warhorses. The Philadelphia Orchestra, however, turned out to be a relatively small contingent from the US ensemble, mixed in with members of the China Conservatory Symphony Orchestra, and under the baton of an assistant conductor, Tristan Rais-Sherman.

First on was Luo, who dispatched a very creditable Tchaikovsky Concerto in D major. Technically, it held no fears for him, and he was extremely competent musically, but it perhaps lacked the spark needed for that next, exceptional level.

Next was Choi playing the Sibelius Concerto in D minor. She demonstrated the star quality I'd heard in her Mozart and was completely assured and confident in her technique and interpretation. However (and it pains me to say this), she was clearly uncomfortable in her concert dress. It was strapless, and though it looked perfectly secure, she kept hitching it up during the orchestral tuttis, sometimes with a rueful smile. I then remembered that she'd been unwell. Imagine the situation: you pack your best concert dress for a fortnight at an international competition, where you fall ill. A few days later you recover, but all your clothes are loose. It was a real bad-luck situation, and I felt for her.

Brown was the last to play, performing the Brahms D major Concerto. I'd managed to dip into a rehearsal the day before, and any concerns I'd had then about his tone being too slim were put to rest on the night. He was majestic in the first movement and dazzling in the third;



Joshua Brown in the Mozart final

but what was particularly memorable was his second movement, and how he spun out silky, weightless phrases that seemed suspended in time.

Again, it was no surprise when the prizes were announced: Brown in first place, scooping that astonishing cash prize of $100,000, Choi in second place with $65,000 and Luo in third place with a prize of $30,000.

I thought that either of the two US competitors could have taken the first prize, and the ultimate decision was down to their individual performances on the night. But what is heartening is that they are both not just experienced competition-goers who are good at handling the pressure, but also musicians with something special to say, and I look forward to seeing how their careers develop. It was certainly an auspicious start for what is a major new international event of the competition world.

JOSHUA BROWN SPUN SILKY, WEIGHTLESS PHRASES THAT SEEMED SUSPENDED IN TIME

ALL PHOTOS GLOBAL MUSIC EDUCATION LEAGUE

Violinist Joshua Bell chats with **Pauline Harding** about transcending the pyrotechnics of Paganini, the inspiring ethos of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, and celebrations to mark the centenary of the orchestra's founder, Neville Marriner

'Everybody's playing like their life depends upon it'

Joshua Bell's facial expression seems to challenge the players of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (ASMF) as he leads them into Paganini's First Violin Concerto. As director of the orchestra, he takes the role of conductor and soloist. His bow and 1713 'Huberman' Stradivari violin bob gently in his left hand while his body and right arm gesticulate softly at first, then more dynamically as the music stomps and tiptoes into full, singing phrases. The players are smiling, united by a buzzing energy. As the music dances towards the first solo entry, Bell blows on his left hand, passes his bow into his right, and shifts his stance.

Like a mage wielding a staff, he lunges towards the orchestra to draw out some accented chords, before making a seamless transformation from conductor to soloist. Plenty of violinistic pyrotechnics follow, but they are incidental to Bell's operatic lines. The orchestra's interjections are subtle and sensitive. These are clearly chamber musicians, not disillusioned rank-and-file players. Their countenance and body language suggest a deep, familial connection. It's June 2023 and they're dressed informally, surrounded by microphones at Air Studios in London, to record this and Paganini's 'La campanella' (from Violin Concerto no.2) for release by Sony in the 2024–25 season. When they play, though, all distractions of instrument cases, bright lights and microphones blur into the background of their music making.

Bell tells me, some months later, that he first performed this concerto when he was 13 years old and studying with Josef Gingold. To record it now, in his mid-fifties, is meaningful to him at a time when he feels that Paganini's music has become fodder for fearless young prodigies. Most established violinists, he laments, prefer to indulge in the likes of Beethoven, Brahms and contemporary repertoire. 'Paganini, Wieniawski and Vieuxtemps used to be the bread and butter of players like Heifetz and Francescatti,' he says. 'Now people think their music is just technical fireworks, but there's much more to it.' That said, he confesses that sometimes even he wonders if Paganini is too much for him. 'I start to play, and I think, "Wait, am I just too old for this?"' he laughs. 'Technically, what am I putting myself through? Because it is very demanding.'

One message that Gingold – a student of Ysaÿe, who was a student of Wieniawski – imprinted in Bell's mind is that these pieces should never be underestimated. To Gingold they were like sacred hymns, among the greatest pieces ever written. Bell did not agree with his teacher about everything: he didn't like his choice of the Sauret cadenza for the Paganini Concerto, for example, with its 'gratuitous technical challenges'. Replacing the Sauret with his own cadenza, which he is 'very, very happy with', has, though, given Bell an even more profound connection to the music. 'Everybody has to find their place,' he says. 'There are other people who can play Berg or Schoenberg better than I can, with a more convincing interpretation, but with some of this older repertoire, I think I have a lot to offer. As an adult, ▸

ASMF PHOTO PETER WALLIS

Joshua Bell (back row, third from left) in Josef Gingold's class at Indiana University

Joshua Bell and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields on tour in Australia

I understand it in a much deeper way than I did when I was younger. Now I think that this Paganini is a masterpiece.'

So, what is the secret to drawing out Paganini's operatic lyricism? The answer, says Bell, is to 'toss off' the technical difficulties so that the music sounds easy. Once you can do that, he says, 'the music is very emotionally compelling. The slow movement is incredibly powerful. And the last movement has wit and charm, like Rossini or Mozart. You really have to phrase and sing.' Of course, this is not something that many violinists achieve with music as difficult as Paganini's. But then Bell – with numerous award-winning recordings, collaborations with world-famous orchestras and performances for three American presidents under his belt – is no 'ordinary' violinist.

Part of Bell's extraordinariness comes through a dissatisfaction with his own playing that keeps him striving for self-betterment. 'I can't bear to listen to performances of myself on the radio, because it's so painful to hear,' he says. 'It's never as good as I'd thought. But it's precisely that pain I should seek out, because of what it exposes.' When he was younger, he would record whole movements at once, several times over. Nowadays, he finds that exhausting, and so, if a piece's architecture allows it, he records in segments, re-recording any that he finds unsatisfactory while previous attempts are still fresh in his mind. He found this approach perfect for Paganini, because of the music's episodic nature. The editing process is still to come, though, and he isn't looking forward to it. 'We recorded it back in the summer, and I felt pretty good about it afterwards,' he says. 'It's been in the can since then, so I'm a little bit afraid to start listening now.' It is when listening to a recording repeatedly during the editing process, he says, that 'I learn so much musically about the way I played technically, about things I didn't even realise I was doing'. Often, when this happens, he wants to scrap everything and head back into the recording studio.

'I CAN'T BEAR TO LISTEN TO PERFORMANCES OF MYSELF ON THE RADIO. IT'S SO PAINFUL TO HEAR. BUT IT'S PRECISELY THAT PAIN I SHOULD SEEK OUT'

Getting the most from Paganini is not, of course, only about work as a soloist. This is where Bell's relationship with ASMF comes in. It was in 1958 that Neville Marriner (1924–2016) – whose centenary ASMF celebrates this April – founded the ensemble in his living room. For Marriner, the action was a gentle rebellion against the dictatorial conductors of his life as principal second violinist of the London Symphony Orchestra. By gradually introducing more like-minded players, he grew his band into a small chamber orchestra. ASMF gave its first public performance in 1959, taking its name from the concert venue: London's church of St Martin-in-the-Fields. Numerous recordings followed, the first recorded in 1961 and released the following year, bringing new vibrancy to works by composers including Handel, Haydn and Corelli, and propelling ASMF and Marriner to fame. Their 1984 recording of music by Mozart for the *Amadeus* film soundtrack, for which Marriner was music supervisor, has sold more 6.5 million copies.

And so it was that Bell, born in 1967, grew up when ASMF and Marriner dominated the classical airwaves. As a child in Bloomington, Indiana, he frequently heard them playing on his parents' radio. The first CD he bought was of their Mozart Requiem. He loved it so much that he used it as a wake-up alarm. 'For a good year in my teens, I woke up every morning to Neville's Mozart Requiem,' he laughs. 'I know it sounds ▹

Bell with the musicians of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields

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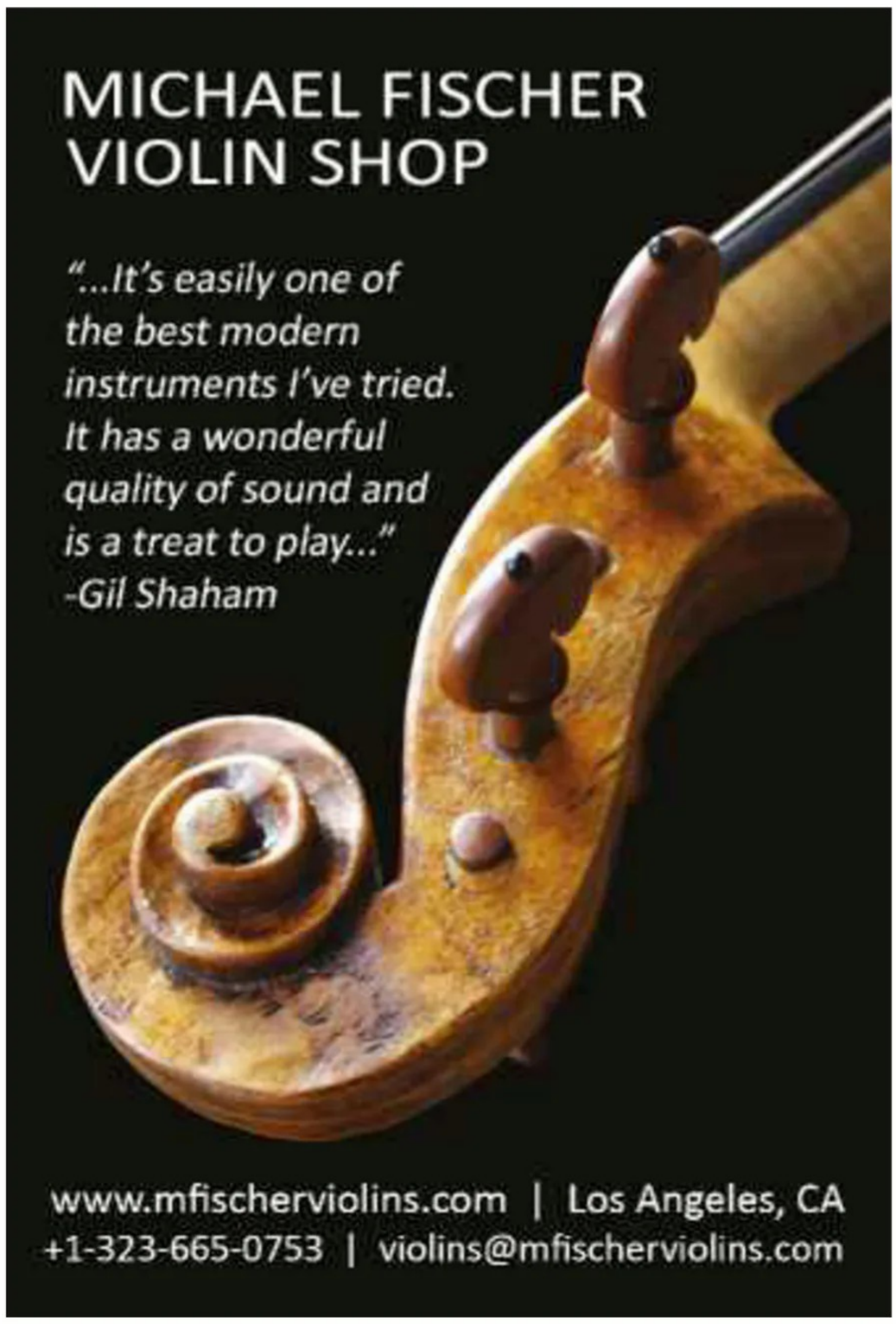

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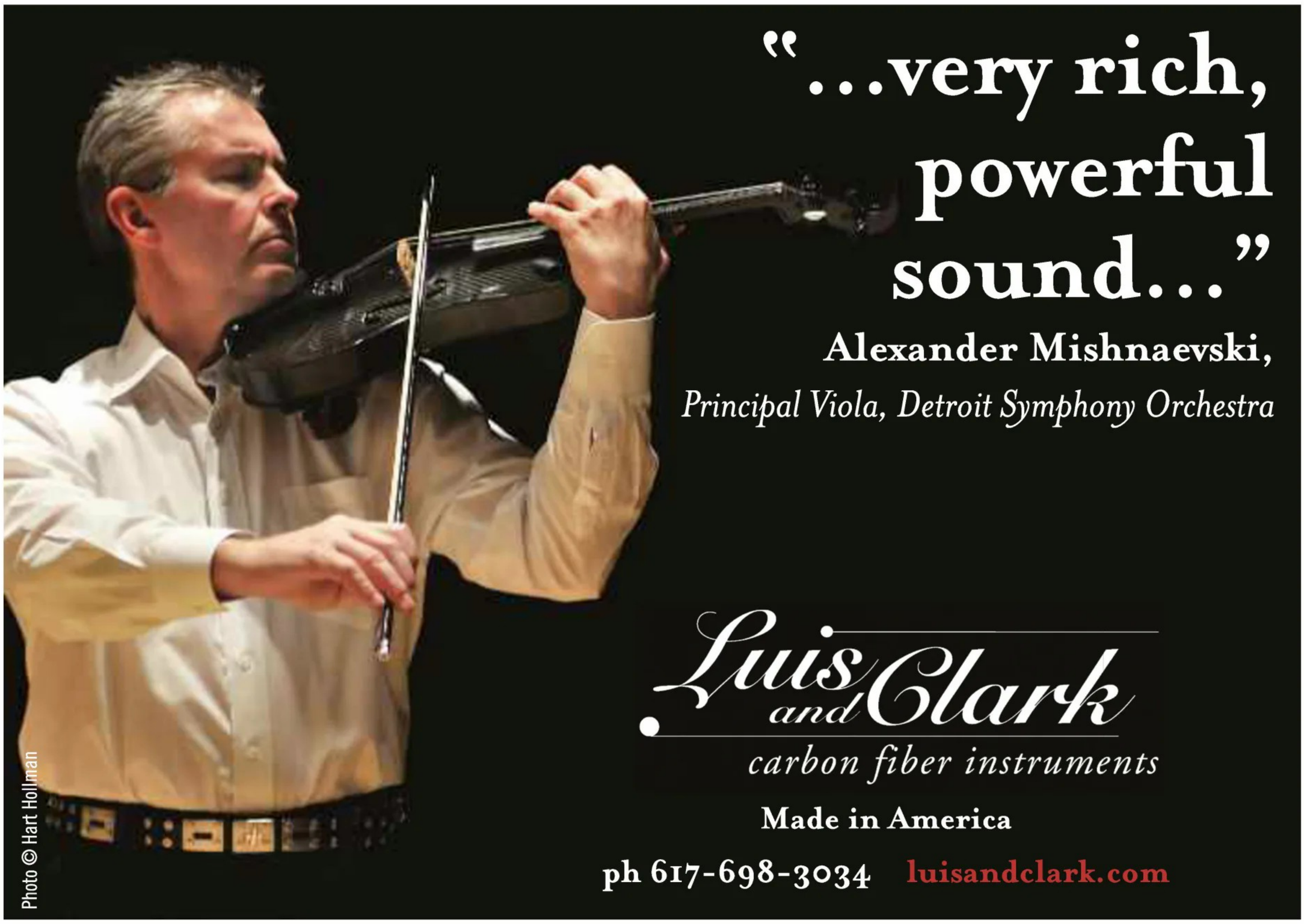

Bell and the ASMF perform at the Sydney Opera House

morbid, because technically it's about death. But death is also life – they're intertwined. And for me it was beautiful and life-affirming.'

Before Bell had even had the opportunity to hear Marriner and ASMF live, he was signed by Decca and thrust into a studio with them in December 1986 (the month he turned 19) to record the Bruch and Mendelssohn concertos. 'There was no concert, or rehearsal, or anything,' he says. 'They just put me in a room, introduced me to Neville Marriner, the red light was turned on, and we started playing. In hindsight, it probably wasn't ideal! But Neville knew what he wanted, and he was very relaxed and adept at recording. So I took his lead, and frankly I don't remember much more about it. It's a bit of a blur.' It was only from the early 2000s that Bell really got to know Marriner and ASMF, though. Over that decade, they played Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, Bell directed an occasional symphony, and they collaborated on tour. 'By the time they asked me to be their music director in 2011, we were already family,' he says.

This gradual initiation allowed Bell to shape his own path as an orchestra-directing violinist, which was something new to him. 'I sit on a slightly higher chair, and I find my moments to play,' he says. 'Sometimes I sit out and direct with my hands – although I've been aiming to foster a sense of everybody leading, feeling contact with each other and not looking at a conductor's stick. I want them to stretch the limits, to strive for colours that they might not have tried before in pieces that they've done a lot. I want them to feel a sense of "do or die". That's the kind of orchestral playing I like, where everybody's playing like their life depends upon it.' This way, Bell hopes that ASMF will never be weighed down by the repetitive habits that sully even great orchestras. 'The Academy doesn't have that feeling of cynicism or laziness that is so common in bigger orchestras,' he says. 'And cynicism is a form of laziness, I find, because it takes energy to infuse a sense of wonder into music making. One reason why I love the Academy is that there's an honesty to the way the musicians play, and they always want to do better. I think a lot of that has come from Neville.'

> 'I WANT THEM TO STRETCH THE LIMITS, TO STRIVE FOR COLOURS THAT THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE TRIED BEFORE. I WANT THEM TO FEEL A SENSE OF "DO OR DIE"'

ASMF's attentive and energetic spirit has been particularly important to Bell while recording the Paganini. 'The concerto is basically an opera for the violin and orchestra, so the players really have to be on their toes,' he says. 'After so many years of ▹

ASMF PHOTO JAY PATEL

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18 APRIL
SIR NEVILLE MARRINER CENTENARY CELEBRATION
7:30pm, Royal Festival Hall
Joshua Bell *Director, Violin*

Marriner's Mozart: Excerpts from *Amadeus*
Saint-Saëns: *Introduction et Rondo Capriccioso*
Vince Mendoza:
Flight of Moving Days European Premiere
Brahms: *Symphony No.2 in D major*

24 APRIL
CELEBRATING NEVILLE MARRINER – HOMECOMING CONCERT
7.30pm, Lincoln Cathedral
Tomo Keller *Leader, Violin*

Programme to include:
Handel: *Concerto Grosso in B flat, Op.3, No.2*
Mozart: *Symphony 25 in G minor*
Vaughan Williams:
Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis
Errollyn Wallen: World Premiere

BELL PHOTO BENJAMIN EALOVEGA. MARRINER PHOTO COURTESY OF ACADEMY OF ST MARTIN IN THE FIELDS

> 'PLAYERS USED TO JOKE THAT IF YOU WERE GOOD AT CRICKET, YOU'D HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF WORKING WITH NEVILLE'

working together, they know my body language very well. They know how I draw my bow, and what it means when I make certain gestures. It still blows my mind how they're able to follow and play together without a conductor. So many of the problems I've had with conductors and orchestras just disappear when I'm with them, because they listen and play like chamber musicians.'

That Bell enjoys working with ASMF so much is just as well, given a packed schedule that will see them performing in 16 US cities during March and April. Immediately afterwards they head to London for a series of concerts to celebrate Marriner's centenary. The festivities begin at the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields on 15 April, which would have been Marriner's 100th birthday. There is much for Bell to look forward to, including performing for the first time at the church that gave ASMF its name. There he will direct Mozart's Symphony no.25 in G minor, as a nod to the *Amadeus* soundtrack. The following night he will lead repertoire including Mendelssohn's Octet in E flat major, his 'desert-island piece and the most glorious piece I can think of', at Wigmore Hall, one of his favourite concert venues.

Finally, at the Royal Festival Hall on 18 April he will direct a Mozart medley from the *Amadeus* soundtrack, interspersed with readings about Marriner's life. He'll perform Saint-Saëns's *Introduction et Rondo capriccioso*, as he did for Marriner's 90th-birthday celebrations at the same venue ten years beforehand. A new concerto for violin and jazz drums by US composer Vince Mendoza will be performed by Bell and Douglas Marriner, Neville's grandson, whom Bell calls 'a very talented jazz percussionist and drummer'. To end, Bell will direct Brahms's Second Symphony, which usually he only hears other orchestras play after he's finished a concerto. 'Now I finally get to delve into it on my own terms and I just can't wait for the rehearsals,' he says. 'It's a piece that's really about celebration. Even Brahms couldn't get over how beautiful it was, from what I've read in his letters. It's a perfect piece to end the programme, as a joyous remembrance of Neville's life.'

To bring that life alive even for audiences who may not have known Marriner (*right*), the centenary celebrations include an exhibition of photographs, tributes, record sleeves, awards and memorabilia at St Martin-in-the-Fields Church for a month from 15 April. ASMF will also celebrate its ongoing work with the homeless, which began under Marriner 25 years ago and continues through The Connection at St Martin-in-the-Fields. To mark this anniversary, ASMF has collaborated with homeless people and students at the Royal Academy of Music to create a Soundwalk app. This will play spoken and music tracks at specific points during a walk around Trafalgar Square, just outside St Martin-in-the-Fields Church, to tell the tales of homelessness that people have experienced there. After the London events, the ASMF concludes the celebrations by heading to Marriner's home town of Lincoln on 24 April to play some of the violinist–conductor's favourite works, including music by Handel and Vaughan Williams, at the cathedral.

All these experiences will conjure Marriner the man, renowned not only for his music making, but also for his kindness, wit, energy and boundless passion for cricket – a game that, I confess to Bell, I find incredibly boring. 'But, oh!' laughs Bell, 'with that attitude you would never have got into the orchestra, because the Academy had a cricket team, and Neville was on it. Players used to joke that if you were good at cricket, you'd have a better chance of working with him.'

Marriner loved magic, too, and for his 90th birthday invited guests including Bell to a magic show. 'He was an English gentleman and a fascinating character,' says Bell. 'The musicians always have kind words to say about him, and always with a smile. To me, that says a lot. He had an incredible life. I played in a concert with him when he was 90 years old – he conducted Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, and it was amazing. Just seeing that inspired me. I hope that I can still conduct and play my violin when I'm 90.' ●

Straight from the heart

Can a new work encourage young, classically trained string players to lose their fear of improvisation and find their individual voice? Violinist Christina Åstrand and composer Signe Lykke explain the concept to **Andrew Mellor**

Two years ago, Christina Åstrand, first concertmaster of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra (DNSO), got a call from the composer Signe Lykke. The two were acquaintances: Åstrand had played a solo piece by Lykke; Lykke was aware of Åstrand from her central position in Danish musical life ('I knew her as the silver-haired woman who sits at the front of the radio orchestra').

There had been murmurings about Åstrand commissioning a new violin concerto from Lykke. On the phone, the conversation spiralled into something bigger. It has since spawned a project that has criss-crossed northern Europe, involved hundreds of musicians from multiple ensembles and even seen the formation of a new company jointly owned by the two, through which they will work to reinvest capital into new projects. A particularly fertile meeting of minds, it has also challenged a good number of orthodoxies the classical music world holds dear – particularly that corner of it concerned with string playing.

Fifteen years separate Åstrand and Lykke. In conversation, they resemble a pair of teenagers: breathlessly talkative, frequently interrupting one another. Their effusive sparring – at Lykke's period-featured studio in the atmospheric heart of old Copenhagen – is riddled with expletives and punctuated by cascading laughter. It bursts with the enthusiasm of ideological emancipation.

The two women's backgrounds contrast sharply. 'I was riding horses when you were at conservatory,' Lykke reminds Åstrand; 'I'm not from a home with art or music. I started all this when I was 19.' Åstrand's father, on the other hand, was principal trumpet in the Aarhus Symphony Orchestra and founded a training ensemble for enthusiastic local string players. His daughter was appointed leader of the DNSO, part of state broadcaster DR, in 1993. After more than three decades in post she has started to question her own saturation in violin technique and pedagogical traditions. 'Because we start when we're so young, many of us string players are already a bit broken by the time we're 16,' she says.

Lykke has reached the same conclusion but from the opposite direction. She sang and played in jazz and rock bands and studied at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen, before switching tack. After obsessively reading scores in libraries, she made the 'weird transition from playing punk and jazz and other stuff' to studying composition in London and Austin, Texas.

Violinist Christina Åstrand and composer Signe Lykke

Signe Lykke (*left*) discusses the score of *Crux* with string players

ALL PHOTOS TILDE DØSSING TORNBJERG

Classical music's assorted doctrines were never hard-wired into Lykke. That freed her up to work in the only way she knows possible: with the collaborative instincts and intuitive freedoms she was used to through playing in bands. 'When I started working as a composer, the whole hierarchy-driven process of "here's a score I've written; go and play it" seemed horrific. Music is something you do as a collective.'

On that initial phone call, those ideas started to scratch creative itches that Åstrand had been contorting herself to reach for decades. 'We lose our confidence as orchestral players,' she says. 'It starts when we're kids, with our first teacher. Then you get to conservatory and it's all very strict. Then you win a place in an orchestra and the conductor tells you what to do – or if they're incompetent, the concertmaster does. You see red lights everywhere you look, which comes from a fundamental position of nervousness and fear that you're not good enough. You lose your capacity for actual expression. Excellent young players audition for me and literally ask: "Can I play *piano* there? Can I phrase this?" Are you kidding me? Yes, you *are* allowed to phrase something!'

These frustrations poured out of Åstrand when she started to hang around at Lykke's studio to talk about the new concerto. So did ideas about how the two could help enact meaningful change. 'We weren't talking about where or when the premiere would be; we were just talking for hours about different approaches to music,' remembers Lykke. Åstrand adds: 'It started to open up things that I had felt very alone with: the way we learn, the way we approach modern music. You, Signe, also felt alone to some degree in the way you compose. We sort of found a missing link.'

The idea of a traditional violin concerto was soon binned. 'We wanted to go deep into the way we play, the way we educate, the way we are,' says Åstrand. What emerged from the process is not so much a single entity, nor even a finished piece of music, as a series of principles and working methods that the two have used to build relationships with musicians across northern Europe. But the partnership harvested something more tangible: a constantly evolving work for 'lead' violinist and strings titled *Crux* (2022). A violin concerto, they insist, it is not.

First to be junked was the idea of a professional orchestra playing the piece and a conductor conducting it. 'In band music,' says Lykke, 'if you're making a noise, you're conducting'. Lykke had previously worked with Denmark's ensemble of young string players DUEN (Det Danske Ungdomsensemble), whose members were open to approaching a new work via improvisation and workshopping and came with the added advantage of 'not really knowing what they're doing with ▸

'BECAUSE WE START WHEN WE'RE SO YOUNG, MANY OF US STRING PLAYERS ARE ALREADY A BIT BROKEN BY THE TIME WE'RE 16'
– *CHRISTINA ÅSTRAND*

Christina Åstrand, concertmaster of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra

their careers so are super hungry and open-minded'. That synced with key features of Åstrand's musical upbringing courtesy of her father: the chance to approach music as something fun, free and expressive.

The central conceit of *Crux* is that of a work which is shaped, in a structural sense, by whoever happens to be playing it at the time. There are some fundamentals, however. Reflecting the four chambers of a heart (the work is inspired by blood flow), the tutti ensemble is made up of four 'chambers': string quintet; two cellos; nine violins; three each of violas and basses. One chamber leads a part of the piece at any given time, while the remaining three play with two sorts of mutes.

The soloist (Åstrand), a sort of *prima inter pares* rather than a standalone virtuoso, takes on some of the duties of a conductor, but, says Lykke, the tutti musicians 'have to take charge or the whole piece will fall apart'. While the work is beat-driven, there are chorale-derived passages in which players from different groups are harmonically aligned and co-dependent.

All that, however, is a mere starting point. *Crux* has now been performed in three countries, six times in all. Each time, it wasn't rehearsed so much as workshopped for three days, over the course of which string players from the Danish, Norwegian and Finnish youth ensembles playing it were encouraged to pull it apart and reshape it in their own image. 'It was the same in each place,' says Åstrand. 'Total fear and silence on day one. A few instances of "Can I ask a question?" on day two. And by day three, a cattle market: people standing in line with full scores, pencils and ideas.'

What were they asking? 'First up, lots of technical stuff,' says Åstrand. '"This trill isn't good – what should I do?" or, "Where on the string should I play this?" And then issues of ensemble would come up: "There's a moment when I am playing in seven but need to play against someone in four," so we tell them, "Everyone will be looking at you here, so you need to use your body."' Lykke adds: 'People were afraid of moving, literally moving with their instrument. How are you going to play seven against four if you're sitting rigidly with your instrument? It can't only be in your fingers.'

Crux, both composer and soloist report, transformed the tutti musicians who were playing it – which was the whole point. 'They really, really opened up; I could see it in their eyes,' says Åstrand. When players encountered difficulties syncing the chorales that sprawl harmonically across all four chambers of the tutti orchestra, Åstrand and Lykke got them to lay down their instruments and sing the parts instead. 'Suddenly everyone was spot on, because they didn't have the difficulty of translating their musicianship on to an instrument, and that's where music begins. Look at any string player, and the moment they put the bow on the string you can almost see them thinking: "Is it going to sound good today?" If it's going to come from your heart, you can't let your instrument take charge. Your own voice must be in charge.'

Composer Signe Lykke (*third from right*) takes a workshop with Ensemble Sonore from Stavanger, Norway

PHOTOS TILDE DØSSING TORNBJERG

Even more significant were Lykke's invitations to improvise and even rewrite. First, she had to negotiate a familiar mental block. 'If you ask a classical musician to play like a bird, they'll run a mile. If you write "like a bird call" in a little box in the score, they'll do it just fine. There were a lot of extended techniques in the score that sounded rubbish when we came to it, so we got the players to freestyle – to mess around or just do what they wanted, which was far better than anything I had written.'

When a bass player in Finland sang a phrase for demonstration while asking about tuning, Lykke was enchanted by the sound of her voice and wrote a part for her to sing. 'The initial score is just a first draft,' she says. 'Everything is up for grabs every time. We cut and delete and replace, freestyle or rewrite depending on how players can best express themselves or what they want.' That's the case up to a point, anyway. Lykke has recently set about assembling all the best bits of performer input from *Crux*'s outings in Stavanger, Copenhagen and Helsinki to create a new edition, which will be recorded by Åstrand and the DNSO. But the more fluid version of *Crux* will live on, and so will the partnerships the duo have formed with youth orchestras across the Nordic region and with the artists they are using to lubricate further explorations of the kind.

It can seem odd that this initiative has come from a concertmaster – a stalwart of the orchestral hierarchy. Åstrand has had plenty of opportunity for self-reflection as she enters her fourth decade leading an orchestra that has arguably never been better (in addition to leading performances on the DNSO's acclaimed recent Nielsen recordings, Åstrand the soloist has made an award-winning recording of Else Marie Pade's violin concerto *Étude* with the Malmö Opera Orchestra under Joachim Gustafsson). By her own admission, Åstrand's communication techniques left a little to be desired in 1993. She now sits at the front of a section that thrives on mutual trust and the principle that anyone can make a decision. 'I feel secure in the job now, so perhaps it's time to do crazy things… and this I feel I have been waiting to do all my life.'

It's about more than realising personal dreams; Åstrand is concerned about the future of the profession. 'I hear young players who have amazing technical skills, but when confronted with their own musical DNA or imagination they go blank and lose all confidence,' she says. '*Crux* has been about trying to change that. The skills young players take from it are vital for the profession and for expression. We know it works because we've seen it work. The ensembles we approached were hungry for it. They couldn't get enough.'

It was contemporary music, Åstrand says, that freed her 'from the strain of tradition and the idea of "the right way of doing things". In new music I could ask composers questions and find my own way; I could say to them, "I think this is the sound you were after, and I actually think it works better on the instrument like this." From that, I found a new joy in old music too – the courage to play repertoire works and concertos my way, without copying anyone.'

A detail from the score of *Crux*

Reflecting on the string ensemble her father created in Aarhus, Åstrand admits that she 'gets goosebumps just talking about it'. In a sense, *Crux* represents her mission to recreate that sense of community – to help shape young string players who need to get out of practice rooms and enjoy playing with their peers just for kicks. 'This is lacking in our music education,' she says. 'We learn to play as soloists. We don't learn togetherness and how to play as a community. Young instrumentalists need to play sports together, eat cake together and then play music together. That's how to get rid of this constant fear of what's going to happen – of something not being good enough.'

That principle courses through Lykke's philosophy of composing. 'When you're interested in co-creating, in getting people into a room and opening up about the creative process and about your ideas, the good and the bad, you have to compromise and you have to find joy in other people. These are muscles that you need to train, so why on earth is nobody strengthening them? It's almost like, in classical music, those things have no value. As long as you can play your orchestral excerpts really fast and they're technically perfect, then you're good to go. But guess what? That's not how the world works any more.' ●

'WHEN YOU'RE INTERESTED IN CO-CREATING, YOU HAVE TO COMPROMISE AND FIND JOY IN OTHER PEOPLE' – *SIGNE LYKKE*

TILDE DØSSING TORNBJERG

PARISIAN SPLENDOUR

Having perfected his skills in the French capital, German bow maker Richard Otto Gläsel was much inspired by the work of his Gallic forebears, from Voirin to Vigneron. **Gennady Filimonov** tells his story and examines several of his finest works

The city of Paris as Gläsel would have known it in 1913

Markneukirchen, the Mirecourt of Germany, dominated the international market of musical instrument sales in the second half of the 19th century. It proved to have better access to exotic woods and was at one time one of the most affluent cities in Germany – it even had its own US consulate general. Nevertheless, while much of the town focused on mass production of musical instruments, a few dedicated makers pursued their craft elsewhere. The advances made in French bow manufacturing by luminaries such as François Xavier Tourte, Étienne Pajeot, Dominique Peccatte and François Nicolas Voirin (known as the 'modern Tourte'), attracted many of Germany's finest makers, such as George Gemünder, H.R. Pfretzschner and Johann Christoph Nürnberger, who for five years worked as assistant to Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume. From that time onwards, many of Germany's best and brightest makers looked to Paris to broaden their knowledge of the French bow making tradition.

Richard Otto Gläsel was one such disciple of the craft. He was an assistant of Claude Thomassin in Paris before returning to Germany just before the outbreak of war in 1914. The experience apparently left him an avowed Francophile, as his bows frequently display the brand 'O. GLÈSEL' – the 'Frenchified' version of his name.

Gläsel, most frequently known by his middle name 'Otto', was born in Markneukirchen on 24 October 1885. According to the records of the town's St Nicholas Church, his father Heinrich Wilhelm Louis Gläsel (d.14 April 1922) was a maker of brass instruments, as well as a 'factory worker' according to the Markneukirchen address books. On 17 May 1877 he married Friedericke Emma Schneider (d.18 October 1932) and the couple had seven children: Heinrich Max, Emil Paul, Richard Otto, Theodor Walter (b.3 March 1889) and three others. Since there is no record of their names, it is possible those three died at birth.

It would be easy to assume that Heinrich's family was connected to the famous Gläsel family of Markneukirchen instrument makers. However, detailed research in the archives indicates that this is not the case. The town's church register indicates he was a 'spurious' (i.e. illegitimate or pre-marital) child of Maria Magdalena Gläsel from Dürngrün, a town just west of Schönbach, who immigrated to Saxony from Bohemia. This was common labour migration in Germany at the border region in the 19th century. Maria later married into the Pöllmann family of makers. Heinrich's grandfather, Johann Andres Gläsel, was a stocking maker in Oberschönbach, so there was no obvious familial connection to instrument making there.

According to the records, only two of Heinrich's four surviving children followed their father into instrument making. They were the two younger sons: Theodor Walter, who was born deaf, became a violin maker. Richard Otto, meanwhile, studied the craft of bow making with Ernst Robert Knorr Sr., a Markneukirchen maker for whom he worked after his training. Knorr was an excellent bow maker himself and spent many years as an independent maker before forming a partnership in 1906 with his brother-in-law Ernst Wilhelm Strobel, co-founding the firm Knorr & Strobel. Their bows are branded 'A.K.' after Knorr's son Arthur, who was also a superlative bow maker.

By 1911 the 25-year-old Gläsel had decided to further his knowledge and try his luck in Paris. He was following in the recent footsteps of Hermann Richard Prell, who had spent two years at the workshop of Eugène Sartory (1897–98), as did Gläsel's contemporary Albert Otto Hoyer, who joined the atelier in 1911 (and, like Gläsel, preferred to use his middle name 'Otto'; his bows are even stamped 'OTTO A. HOYER' rather than 'A. OTTO'). Years later Paul Weidhaas followed suit, working with Victor Fétique. Richard Otto secured a position at 37 Rue de Paradis to work as an assistant to Claude Thomassin, one of the most prolific and important bow makers of his generation, whose influence is apparent in many details of Gläsel's bows.

It must have been a very exciting time for Gläsel and his colleagues to have been working in Paris. Looking at the 1913 address book (*below*) we see many familiar names such as Sartory, Charles Peccatte, André Vigneron, Prosper Colas, Louis Bazin, Charles Claude Husson, Alfred Lamy and Paul Jombar.

As the Industrial Revolution paved the way to progress, it brought monumental changes in art, music, science and politics. And while Paris was introduced to the premieres of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) and Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913), political tensions and events were leading up to the worst war the world had ever seen.

Otto Hoyer left Sartory's shop in 1913 to return to Markneukirchen, while Gläsel came back the following year. He set up shop in the family home at Lindleinstrasse 603, Markneukirchen, where he spent the war years. His brothers were not so lucky. As the Great War erupted, following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, Richard Otto's two elder brothers were mobilised to the front lines. Heinrich Max was killed, and Emil Paul was reported missing in action. ▷

ARCHETS

BOWS — BOGEN — ARCOS

Bazin Louis, rue Estivant.	MIRECOURT
Voyez l'annonce page 140.	
Colas Prosper, 22, rue Beaurepaire.	PARIS
Compagnie Française Odéon, 11, faubourg Poissonnière.— Tél. Gutenberg 33-35 et Central 50-94.	PARIS
Voyez l'annonce page 140.	
Cristofaro E. de, 12, boulevard Saint-Martin.	PARIS
Cuniot-Hury, 43, rue Vuillaume.	MIRECOURT
Fissore Joseph fils, 51, rue de Chabrol.— Tél. Nord 55-44.	PARIS
Husson (Fabrication et Réparations), 14, faubourg Saint-Denis.	PARIS
Jombar P., 27, faubourg Poissonnière.	PARIS
Laberte-Humbert, 1, avenue Charles-Duchêne.	MIRECOURT
Lamy A., 34, rue Poissonnière.	PARIS
Morhange A., 38, rue Vivienne.— Tél. Gutenberg 60-47.	PARIS
Peccatte A., 8, rue de Valois.	PARIS
Roux L., 66, boulevard de Picpus.	PARIS
Sartory, 13, faubourg Poissonnière.	PARIS
Thibouville, Lamy et Cie, 68 bis, rue Réaumur.— Tél. Archives 30-72.	PARIS
Thomassin M., 37, rue de Paradis.	PARIS
Vigneron A., 54, rue de Cléry.	PARIS

Richard Otto Gläsel octagonal violin bow branded J. PADEWET CARLSRUHE on the handle, branded O. GLÈSEL A PARIS under the winding. c.1922-25

Violin bow c.1925–30 stamped 'O. GLÈSEL A PARIS'. Highly flamed round pernambuco stick mounted in silver; plain ebony frog, with a silver-capped button and a second cut at the collar.

PADEWET BOW PHOTOS ALEXANDRU DUMITRACHE, COURTESY OF JONATHAN FROHNEN. ALL OTHER PHOTOS GENNADY FILIMONOV

The 1925 Markneukirchen address book shows that (Richard) Otto, (Theodor) Walter Gläsel and their widowed mother Emma Gläsel all resided at the same address. Otto was listed as a bow maker and Walter as a violin maker. In 1929 Lindleinstrasse 603 (Lindleinsweg 603) was renumbered to Lindleinstrasse 4, where again we find Otto, Walter and Emma Gläsel.

In view of the politics of the time, and especially considering the horrors of the war, Richard Otto came back with a very French perspective on bow making. He was not deterred by the radically 'German' culture of the Weimar Republic, and his business cards read *Ex ouvrier de C. Thomassin à Paris* ('Former employee of C. Thomassin in Paris'). He also branded his bows 'O. GLÈSEL A PARIS', implying that his work was more French than German.

His colleague Otto Hoyer must have had a similar sentiment as he earned the nickname *Pariser* ('the Parisian'), which he proudly branded on his bows on his own return to Germany, where he put his training and experience at Sartory's workshop to good use. His business cards and letterhead clearly state 'Schüler von E. Sartory à Paris'.

As I examined some of their personal work, I got a sense that Richard Otto and Albert Otto must have known each other and may have shared ideas about their work. Not only were they in Paris at the same time, but back in Markneukirchen they lived within a few blocks of each other. I posed this question to Otto Hoyer's grandson Willi, but unfortunately his reply was: 'I cannot answer your question. My grandfather was the only person who could know this, but he died last November.'

Otto Hoyer 'Pariser' in his workshop, taken during the 1920s
Below Otto Hoyer's letterhead

Gläsel's house at Lendleinstrasse 4 in Markneukirchen

Violin bow c.1925 branded O. GLÈSEL Á PARIS. Highly figured pernambuco mounted in silver ebony with Parisian eyes fit into the flanks. Silver-capped button with a second cut at the collar

HOUSE PHOTO ENRICO WELLER BOW PHOTOS ALEXANDRU DUMITRACHE, COURTESY OF JONATHAN FROHNEN

Gläsel's work branded 'O. GLÈSEL' is splendid, especially the heads and the rest of the stick, which epitomise the ideal of the French working style. The frogs are more Germanic in style. One can find a considerable number of bows stamped 'O. GLÈSEL A PARIS'. The bows from the early 1920s, branded 'OTTO GLÈSEL' (his other brand stamp) and those marked 'TUBBS' bear resemblance to Otto Hoyer's work from the same period, especially at the frog. They have an elongated sloping thumb grip (perhaps an exaggerated Sartory influence), Parisian eyes and the French-style silver-capped buttons. Gläsel also incorporated a rounded-off ferrule (à la Thomassin) on his bows.

On the right, we can see the typical Hoyer model that we are familiar with, the 'swan head' and a frog with a deep sloping thumb grip with Parisian eyes fitted into the flanks and a silver cap button. The two bows below it, both by Richard Otto Gläsel, are biult on a similar model.

I have examined two Gläsel bows branded 'C. THOMASSIN À PARIS' (with the authentic Thomassin stamp). One is indicative of his Paris period, while the other is from the early 1920s and is similar to the ones branded 'TUBBS' and 'OTTO GLÈSEL'.

Gläsel was also a violin maker, whose customers included the Hamburg maker Georg Winterling (1859–1929). I have come across one particular Gläsel violin made for Winterling which contains the label (*below right*): 'Charles Gaillard, No. 20, Rue Notre Dame-de-Recouvrance, No. 20, Paris, 1865.' But inscribed in the inside top plate are the words: *Fait par Luthier et Archetier O. Gläsel, avant la Guerre a Paris. Ouvrier de C. Thomassin et G. Winterling* ('Made by luthier and archetier O. Gläsel, before the War in Paris. Worker of C. Thomassin and G. Winterling') and *O. Gläsel geb. 1885, Markneukirchen, Lindleinstr. 603* ('O. Gläsel born 1885, Markneukirchen, Lindleinstr. 603.)

Gläsel also produced bows for his colleague Johann Karl Padewet (1887–1971) in Karlsruhe, Germany. These bows were made between 1922 and 1930 and stamped 'J. PADEWET CARLSRUHE' on the handle near the button, and 'O. GLÉSEL A PARIS' under the winding.

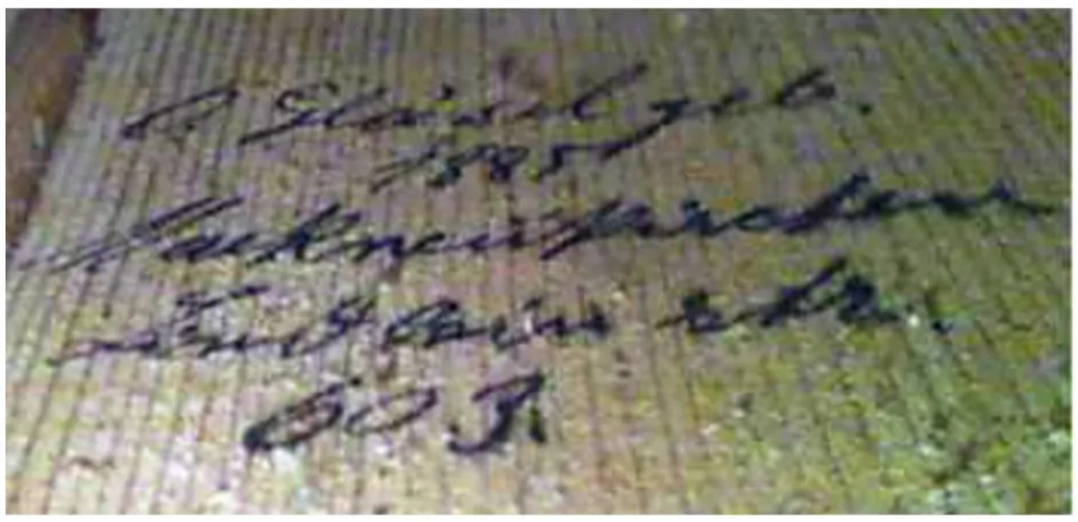
The years following World War I did incomparable damage to the German economy. In Berlin in late 1921, a loaf of bread would have cost 4 German marks. In 1922 it cost 160, and in November 1923 201 billion marks. Needless to say, it was almost impossible for the common working people to make ends meet, and many of them were obliged to take drastic measures to keep their heads above water. In the string world, there was a great temptation among bow makers to pass off their own brand new bows as the work of some of the great 19th-century archetiers. ▹

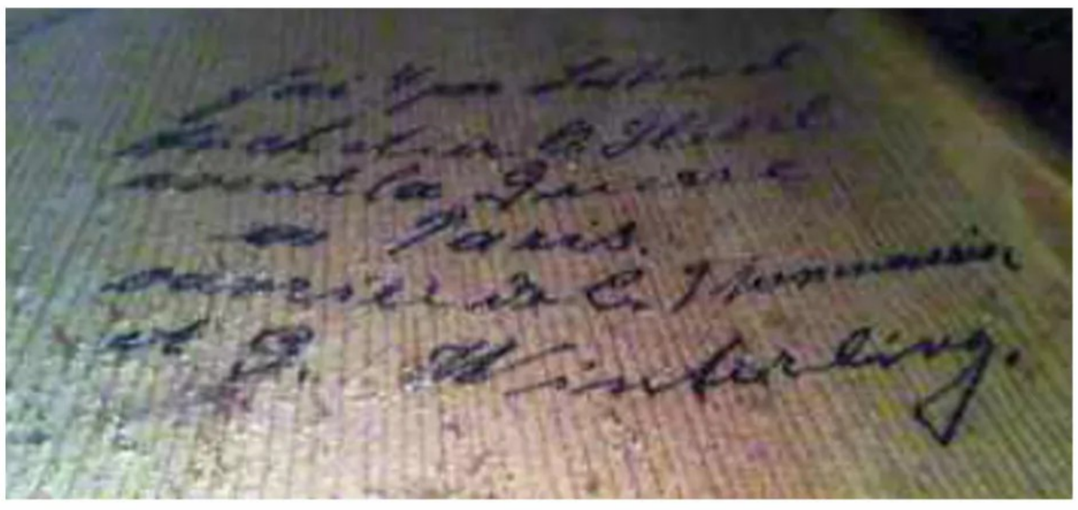
GLÄSEL CAME BACK TO GERMANY WITH A VERY FRENCH PERSPECTIVE ON BOW MAKING

Otto A. Hoyer frog and button

Richard Otto Gläsel frog and button (branded OTTO GLÈSEL)

Richard Otto Gläsel frog and button (branded TUBBS)





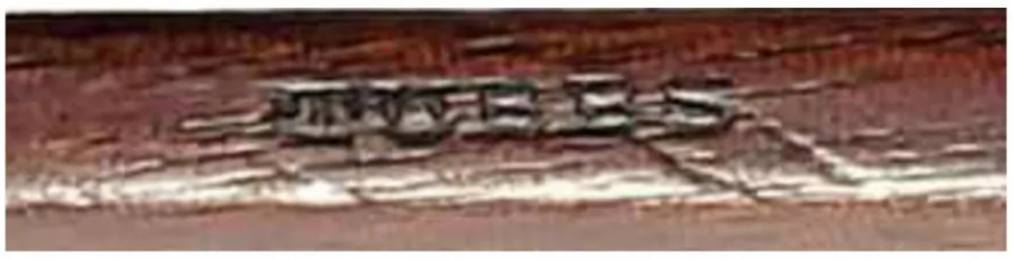
Inscriptions inside a violin made by Gläsel

ALL PHOTOS GENNADY FILIMONOV

Vuillaume-style cello bow frog, branded VUILLAUME À PARIS on the handle, O. GLÈSEL A PARIS under the winding

Cello bow branded F.N. VOIRIN a PARIS on the handle, OTTO GLÈSEL under the winding

Cello bow branded A. VIGNERON A PARIS on the handle, OTTO GLÈSEL under the winding



Violin bow branded TUBBS on the handle, OTTO GLÈSEL under the winding

Violin bow branded A. LAMY A PARIS on the handle and under the winding

Violin bow branded F.N. VOIRIN A PARIS on the handle and under the winding

Bow branded 'J. PADEWET CARLSRUHE' on the handle and O. GLÈSEL A PARIS under the winding

Bow branded C. THOMASSIN À PARIS on the handle

Many manufacturing companies were mass-producing cheap bows with famous brand names just to capitalise on the maker's name, a practice that individual makers adopted owing to the economic hardship. It is hard to say whether any particular maker was motivated to produce fakes out of survival instinct, or from malicious intent to deceive, or was simply just making a bow 'inspired by' one of the better-known makers. There are French-model bows currently in circulation that are branded: 'BAUSCH', 'DODD', 'KITTEL', 'TOURTE', 'VUILLAUME', 'EUG. SARTORY' and 'A. LAMY A PARIS' – except they were produced by German makers such as Niklas Hoyer, Emanuel Schuster and Carl Albert Nürnberger.

In the US, too, unscrupulous individuals were exploiting some of the German makers' abilities to produce fake bows. The New York wholesaler Samuel Buegeleisen became notorious for marketing bows with brands such as the wholly fictitious 'Leon Pique' (which allegedly were made by Otto Hoyer early on) and fake Sartorys, which caused Eugène Sartory a lot of grief financially, emotionally and physically. These certainly were made to deceive the public, as Buegeleisen went out of his way to promote them with intent to deceive (see 'Phoney War', *The Strad*, February 2019). In the opinion of bow expert Klaus Grünke, it was this practice that damaged the reputation of German bow making in general.

It is certain that, like most of his colleagues, Richard Otto Gläsel suffered the economic consequences of World War I, and was forced to make copies of the great masters' work using fake brands, simply to make ends meet. The Great Depression, which started as an American crisis with a huge stock market

Richard Otto Gläsel violin bow c.1925-30 branded ‘F.N. VOIRIN À PARIS’ on the handle and same under the winding. A refined and superb copy made of dark brown Pernambuco, mounted in gold and ebony, and fashioned with a Vuillaume-style frog and seating

crash in 1929, spread around the world and caused widespread unemployment, misery and starvation in Germany. These were the conditions that ultimately paved the way to the rise of Hitler.

The majority of Gläsel’s work was stamped with various brands of famous French bow makers, such as ‘VUILLAUME À PARIS’, ‘F.N. VOIRIN A PARIS’, ‘A. LAMY A PARIS’, ‘A. VIGNERON A PARIS’ and, ‘C. THOMASSIN À PARIS’. However, under the winding we also often find the additional brand ‘OTTO GLÈSEL’ or ‘O. GLÈSEL A PARIS’. Unfortunately, some of the fine copies he made for particular clients or shops were given fake brands on the handle and under the lapping, keeping him anonymous. The bow shown above is a gold/ebony F.N. Voirin copy. This is an exceptional example of his copyist skills, from the head design to the refined Vuillaume-style frog and button, superb in its execution in every way (branded ‘F.N. VOIRIN A PARIS’ at the handle and the same under the winding).

Sadly, at the onset of the Great Depression in Germany, the 45-year-old Richard Otto Gläsel committed suicide on 29 January 1931. His mother Emma Gläsel died the following year on 18 October 1932. After her death, Walter sold the Gläsel house and moved to Wernitzgrüner Strasse 34 in Markneukirchen. Richard Otto Gläsel’s short-lived working career shows an interesting evolution in style, as he has left a considerable number of high-quality instruments and bows, some of which make us wonder if ‘they could be French’. ●

The author wishes to thank Enrico and Mario Weller, Bruce Babbitt, Klaus Grünke, C. Jochen Schmidt, Edward Schwen, Willi Hoyer, Jonathan Frohnen, Jeffrey Judd and Johan Grobbelaar

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY JOHAN GROBBELAAR

SCENES FROM A LIFE

As the Carducci Quartet releases its third Shostakovich disc, **Tom Stewart** hears from the group's violist and cellist about the extreme contrasts between the two featured pieces – the ninth and fifteenth string quartets by the same composer back to back but still find so much variety and tell such an interesting story.'

The Soviet Union in the 1970s was characterised by social, political and economic stagnation – or so the story goes. Dmitri Shostakovich, the country's pre-eminent composer, completed his fifteenth and final string quartet in 1974, the year before he died. The extent to which his music was a commentary on his life and times is still a matter of debate, but the work's six movements, all slow and all in E flat minor, constitute a study of stillness lasting around 35 minutes. However, their bare textures and static harmonies belie a sense of disquiet which pervaded the world around Shostakovich and make it difficult not to hear the quartet as a reflection on his own impending death.

'It's always seen as a meditation on mortality,' explains Emma Denton, cellist of the London-based Carducci Quartet. 'The music is so fragile in places, you can't help but be affected by the incredible starkness.' The group's new disc pairs the Fifteenth Quartet with the Ninth, written ten years earlier. 'We made the recording just after we came out of lockdown,' she continues, explaining that her father – who introduced her to Russian music – had recently died. 'The lines are so fragile and haunting – you feel so isolated. The tempo, ♩ = 80, is the same through almost the entire thing, like a heartbeat. Making this recording was a very powerful experience for me.'

This is the quartet's third Shostakovich disc, following recordings of the quartets nos.4, 8 and 11 released in 2015, and nos.1, 2 and 7 released in 2019. They have performed numerous complete cycles, most memorably in 2015 when they played all fifteen in a single day. 'We connected with the music in a way we weren't expecting,' says Denton. 'It took us by surprise, and we were really sad the following year because we'd been on such a journey with the music and it had come to an end.' Violist Eoin Schmidt-Martin agrees: 'It blew our minds that you could play fifteen pieces

'AFTER WE'VE PLAYED THE FINAL NOTES OF NO.15, THE AUDIENCE OFTEN SITS THERE FROZEN IN A STUNNED SILENCE' – *EOIN SCHMIDT-MARTIN, VIOLA*

Pulled in different directions by the whims of his country's evolving cultural doctrine, Shostakovich is the archetypal composer of Soviet Communism. As questions about his personal politics remain, so too does the search for symbolism in his music, which is by turns triumphant, sorrowful and grotesque. 'Playing all the quartets together made us realise how they told the story of his life,' says Schmidt-Martin. 'When you look into the historical context of each one, you see how they're all so specific and original.' The quartets are masterpieces in their own right, he says, but they can't be separated from the world that gave rise to them. 'We've performed them with readings of texts from the time, or from Shostakovich's own letters. You can't help but think about the story.'

The hushed chorales and long, sighing lines of the later piece are a complete contrast to the dance rhythms and furious energy of the Ninth, whose music sounds in some ways more like Bartók. 'The dense, homogeneous writing of the earlier quartet is completely different, with a huge and aggressive build-up that just keeps coming,' says Denton. To illustrate the difference, she points to a passage in the final movement where Shostakovich gives all four players triple- and quadruple-stopped chords. 'You play them pizzicato and as loud as you can. It's incredible.' Schmidt-Martin explains

ANDY HOLDSWORTH

Eoin Schmidt-Martin and Emma Denton recording the Shostakovich quartets in 2021

Matthew Denton and Michelle Fleming, first and second violinists respectively

that the later quartets are much sparser in comparison: 'There's a vulnerability, a fragility to them that leaves you with nowhere to hide. After we've played the final notes of no.15, the audience often sits there frozen in a stunned silence.'

'Both quartets are extraordinarily intense,' says Denton, 'and usually you play through each of them without a pause between movements.' Not all performances call for the athletic and musical endurance required by the group's 2015 marathon, but all music that takes the player (and listener) on such a complex journey does require a certain level of emotional commitment. So how do they transfer that to the recording studio, where the temptation can be to take a forensic, detail-driven approach? 'We tried to play the longest takes we could because you want to keep the essence of the music alive. You'll kill it otherwise,' says Schmidt-Martin.

The key, Denton explains, is not to overthink it. 'The second movement of the Fifteenth Quartet starts with us all on these long up bows going to massive accents,' she says. 'When we're performing in concert, we don't think about whether or not our bows are matching because we're just going for it. I noticed myself thinking about the bows when we were recording, though, and I had to get out of that headspace quickly and go for the big gesture like we would in a concert hall.' It's also important, says Schmidt-Martin, to know when to take a break: 'If you've done the first movement of the Ninth Quartet a couple of times, you're going to need to take five and recharge, as it just takes so much out of you. Then you can come back and commit to it fully again.'

'I NOTICED MYSELF THINKING ABOUT THE BOWS WHEN WE WERE RECORDING, AND I HAD TO GET OUT OF THAT HEADSPACE AND GO FOR THE BIG GESTURE' – *EMMA DENTON, CELLO*

Next year marks half a century since Shostakovich died. Unsurprisingly, the Carducci players have plenty planned to mark the anniversary, including a big project spread out across the year alongside several younger quartets. They are also planning a number of complete cycles, as in 2015, when they marked the 40th anniversary of the composer's death. 'Whenever we play them I feel like I'm learning something,' Denton says. 'We once did all fifteen in a small city in Colombia, which was absolutely extraordinary. Everyone turned out, young and old, and for many of them it was their first experience of a classical concert.' Although they may have not have known who Shostakovich was, she says, the music was no less powerful. 'They were queuing round the block, which just goes to show what these quartets can do!'

WORKS **Shostakovich String Quartets nos.9 and 15**
ARTISTS **Carducci Quartet**
RECORDING VENUE **Cedars Hall, Wells Cathedral School, Somerset, UK**
RECORDING DATES **6–9 April 2021**
CATALOGUE NUMBER **Signum Classics SIGCD 786**
RELEASE DATE **19 April 2024**

PHOTOS COURTESY CARDUCCI QUARTET

BORIS PERGAMENSCHIKOW

AN OLD-SCHOOL GENTLEMAN

Russian cellist Boris Pergamenschikow enjoyed an influential career both teaching and playing in Europe after leaving the Soviet Union, before his untimely death twenty years ago. **Oskar Falta** examines his legacy and hears from some of his former students

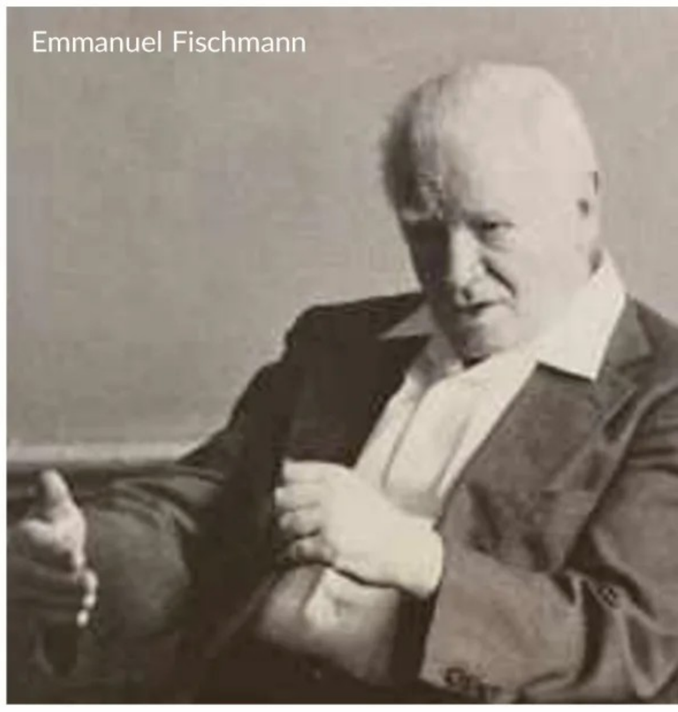
Very few musicians have successfully managed to combine an international solo career with dedicated teaching. The Russian cellist Boris Pergamenschikow (1948–2004) did just that. The world of music lost him too soon, but his memory lives on through his recorded legacy and the work of his students.

Pergamenschikow was born on 29 August 1948 in post-war Leningrad (today's St Petersburg) to musical parents of Jewish descent. His mother, Esther (née Schneersohn), was a pianist trained at the Moscow Conservatoire, while his father, Miron, a veteran of the First World War, was a military music conductor and a skilled cellist. As a consequence of Stalin's campaign against Jewish intellectuals, both parents had to rely on odd jobs to make ends meet, as neither of them could find work in their chosen field. The young family lived in two rooms of a typical Soviet communal apartment with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Early in his childhood, Pergamenschikow began playing the piano. When it was time to choose his main instrument, his parents made a practical decision – in a market flooded with pianists and violinists, a cellist had a better chance of making a living. At the age of seven, after initial cello lessons with his father, Pergamenschikow was accepted at the specialist children's music school of the Leningrad Conservatoire, where he studied the cello with Benjamin Morozov for the following five years. Then he switched to the class of Emmanuel Fischmann, who became his mentor until his graduation from the conservatoire proper twelve years later.

A student of Alexander Shtrimer and a prominent figure in the Leningrad cello school, Fischmann is perhaps best known today as Mischa Maisky's teacher. He used easy language that children could understand, and although he didn't provide much advice on practising,

Boris Pergamenschikow playing his 1735 Domenico Montagnana



Emmanuel Fischmann

he had a clear vision of each student's development. Fischmann's pupils had to tackle scales and Dotzauer and Duport studies, and master concertos by Romberg, Davidov and Popper before advancing to the standard repertoire. This approach 'did not risk spoiling the great music like Schumann and Haydn by using it as an etude', explained Pergamenschikow in an interview for *The Strad* in September 2000. When he later became a teacher himself, Pergamenschikow realised that the longer he taught, the more similarities he saw between Fischmann's and his own teaching methods (as related by his wife in her 2008 book *Boris Pergamenschikow: Im Spiegel der Erinnerungen*).

Another significant influence on Pergamenschikow's artistic growth was the cellist Daniil Shafran, whose concerts Pergamenschikow never missed, as he recalled in Antti Sairanen's *Daniil Shafran: Cello Solo* (2009): 'Shafran's performing style captivated us young cellists. Of course, many of us tried to imitate him. In those years we didn't understand that any imitation of such an original artist became virtually a caricature.' To his great joy, he started having private lessons with Shafran in Moscow around 1969 and thus became one of his first students. These lessons were also an inspiration for Pergamenschikow's own future pedagogical approach: 'Shafran's style of teaching and his way of communicating had given me the correct tone for my behaviour in working with young musicians.'

Hard work soon began to bear fruit when Pergamenschikow won first prize in the 1970 cello edition of the Prague Spring competition. However, the greatest triumph came at the 1974 International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, where he was awarded the cello-category gold medal. This victory opened doors to new concert engagements. Tours ensued, primarily within the USSR but also abroad in South America. Nevertheless, the Gosconcert, a corrupt, state-run agency with a monopoly over all artistic engagements abroad, mostly allowed him to perform only within the Soviet Union, and far from its cultural centres. ▷

PERGAMENSCHIKOW STARTED HAVING PRIVATE LESSONS WITH DANIIL SHAFRAN AROUND 1969 AND THUS BECAME ONE OF HIS FIRST STUDENTS

MAIN PHOTO KLAUS RUDOLPH. FISCHMANN PHOTO COURTESY OF TANJA PERGAMENSCHIKOW

Daniil Shafran (*left*) and Pergamenschikow (*right*) at the awards ceremony of the 1970 Prague Spring Competition

On the rare occasions when he did perform abroad, the authorities confiscated most of his concert fees. Besides that, he was not allowed to have a teaching position, which added to his growing frustration with the oppressive system.

When the opportunity arose for Soviet-Jewish citizens to apply for an exit visa to Israel, Pergamenschikow and his family seized the chance and eventually left the USSR in 1977. Israel was never their intended destination, though. They travelled via Vienna, staying there for three months and finally moving to Cologne, where Pergamenschikow joined the cello faculty of the Cologne University of Music, succeeding Siegfried Palm.

From that point on, Pergamenschikow's career took a new turn – he started appearing as a soloist with major orchestras on international stages and forming new chamber music partnerships, as his vast and diverse discography testifies. Highlights include several albums of sonatas with pianist Pavel Gililov for the Orfeo label; two discs of Haydn piano trios for Decca with pianist András Schiff and violinist Yuuko Shiokawa; Schubert piano trios with Paul Badura-Skoda (piano) and Wolfgang Schneiderhan (violin), published posthumously by Gramola in 2019; Penderecki's Cello Concerto no.2 with the Bamberg Symphony under the composer (Orfeo label); and Dutilleux's cello concerto *Tout un monde lointain…* with the BBC Philharmonic under Yan Pascal Tortelier. Last but not least, Pergamenschikow's Bach Cello Suites recorded for Hänssler in 1998 are a must-hear. His cello from 1982 onwards was a 1735 Domenico Montagnana now owned by the Razumovsky Trust and currently played by David Cohen, principal cellist of the London Symphony Orchestra.

Alongside his teaching post in Cologne, Pergamenschikow also briefly taught at the Basel Music Academy in Switzerland (1987–8). From 1996 he was a much-valued regular guest teacher at the Kronberg Academy, which has awarded the Boris Pergamenschikow Scholarship to young cellists since 2004.

EVEN IN FAST PASSAGES PERGAMENSCHIKOW PLAYED ONE FINGER AT A TIME, ALMOST LIKE A PIANIST

In 1998 he was appointed professor at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler Berlin, a position he held until his death in 2004.

As a teacher, Pergamenschikow nurtured an impressive number of future cello stars. Among those who benefited from his wisdom were Claudio Bohórquez, Alban Gerhardt and Hans-Christian Schweiker, who all studied with him at the Cologne University of Music; and Nicolas Altstaedt, Julian Arp, Amit Peled, Emil Rovner and Julian Steckel, who knew him at the Berlin Hochschule. I was delighted when all these star cellists agreed to share their memories with me, twenty years after Pergamenschikow's death, and explain what made their teacher unique.

Schweiker was one of Pergamenschikow's first students in Germany and a long-time teaching assistant throughout the 1980s. When he first encountered Pergamenschikow, he was amazed by his ability to create a powerful sound without needing to be a heavyweight champion. 'I wanted to learn his secret,' says Schweiker. By observing Pergamenschikow in action, he was able to define several core principles of his teacher's technique. For example, analysing his left-hand movements, he noticed that even in fast passages Pergamenschikow played one finger at a time, almost like a pianist – putting full weight on the active finger while keeping the remaining fingers lying freely on the string. Along the same lines, Rovner describes Pergamenschikow's effective use of left-hand articulation: 'He allowed the finger to fall down with a lot of weight, releasing it immediately after. This way, his left hand never got tired.'

According to Bohórquez, Pergamenschikow was meticulous in his approach, leaving nothing to chance: 'He was known for having three or more fingering options for technically challenging passages: a risky but musically appealing one,

Pergamenschikow with Nicolas Altstaedt at the Kronberg Academy in 2002

PRAGUE PHOTO STANISLAV MARŠÁL, PRAGUE SPRING FESTIVAL. KRONBERG PHOTO LUTZ STERNSTEIN, KRONBERG ACADEMY

Teaching Gavriel Lipkind at the Kronberg Academy in 2002

TEACHING WITH A SCORE IN HAND OR FROM BEHIND THE PIANO, HE USED METAPHORS AND STORIES TO MAKE HIS POINT

a safe option that typically involved the thumb à la Shafran, and finally, an unconventional fingering that was beneficial as a left-hand exercise.' Peled adds, 'On rare occasions, if a student discovered a fingering that Pergamenschikow hadn't yet thought of, he took a coin out of his pocket and asked: "Can I buy it from you?"'

As for vibrato, Pergamenschikow used it with both rounded and flattened fingers, depending on the musical context. In Schweiker's view, the second option is a helpful tool for cellists with slim fingers, as it can significantly expand their possibilities for expression. One day, Schweiker entered the class and saw Pergamenschikow vibrating a single note, moving and rotating his whole arm in all possible directions – 'What are you doing?' he asked. 'I am searching for the perfect finger placement,' replied Pergamenschikow. In the spirit of Shafran, he used the thumb as an extra finger, as is evident from Steckel's recollection: 'He taught us to play *The Swan* by Saint-Saëns with the thumb only… a great exercise for thumb vibrato!'

Anticipation was a key aspect of Pergamenschikow's pedagogy, whether it concerned a position change, a string-crossing or indeed any other upcoming action. Schweiker explains, 'Every note is divided into two parts: the note itself and the preparation for the next one. Once the bow starts, everything has to have been decided already.' Over Zoom, he demonstrates a practical example, step by step, on an ascending string-crossing in one bow: 'Play the lower string while gradually lifting the elbow in anticipation of the higher string. Then comes a moment when, for a fraction of a second, you actually play both strings at once, before you finally cross over to the higher string.'

Pergamenschikow seldom demonstrated on the cello in lessons. Teaching with a score in hand or from behind the piano (being an excellent pianist, he accompanied most of the repertoire his students played), he used imagery, metaphors and stories to make his point. Altstaedt recalls, 'After playing through a piece, he gave us the opportunity to ask questions. Then he replied with questions of his own that helped us understand where we were careless with technical details, didn't listen to ourselves or neglected the musical text – not paying enough attention to the score.' Such a reflective teaching style stimulated discussions. Arp gives some examples of the kinds of question that would lead to these conversations: 'How do you create a three-dimensional sound so that it carries to the back row of the hall?' or, 'Which different colours can you mix by combining vibrato, bow speed and bow pressure?'

Especially in Pergamenschikow's later career, there was a long waiting list to join his studio, and most of the students he accepted were already accomplished artists, seeking to refine their interpretation still further. One big advantage of studying with him was the fact that he was an active concerto soloist and was therefore able to give practical advice regarding sound projection in the hall, when to listen to a particular orchestral section in the piece or when to look at the conductor.

Despite the high level of his class, Pergamenschikow emphasised the importance of returning to basics, such as perfecting bow control through specific exercises. Bohórquez remembers one of them: 'While playing an open string, lift the right-hand fingers one finger at a time off the bow stick to improve your understanding of the role of each finger ▹

PHOTO LUTZ STERNSTEIN, KRONBERG ACADEMY

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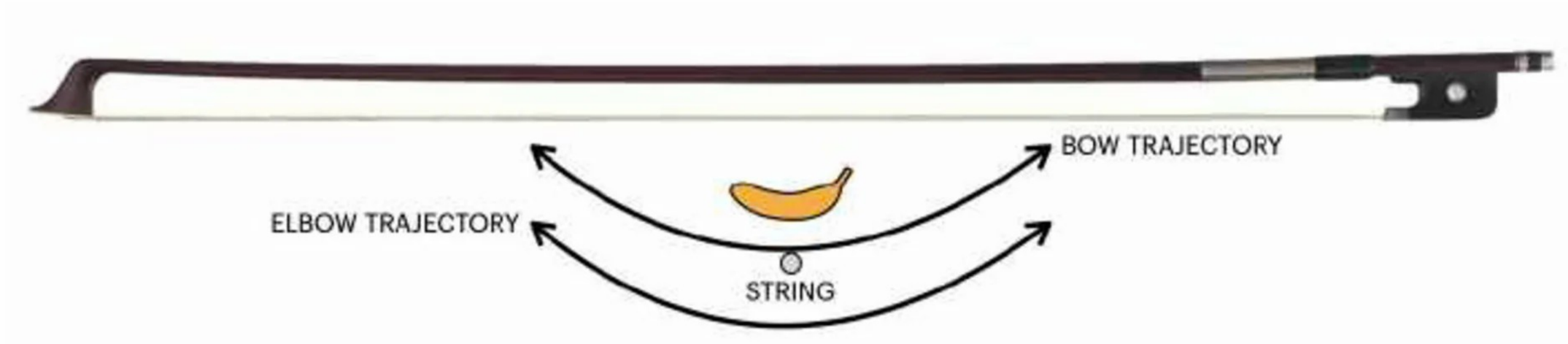
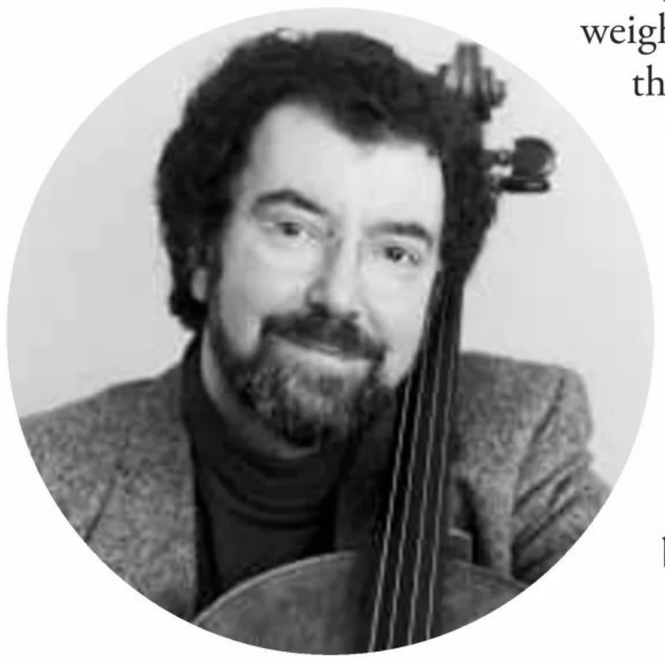


EXAMPLE 1 Pergamenschikow's 'banana bow' exercise

in the overall balance of the bow.' Most of Pergamenschikow's former students are familiar with what he called the 'banana bow' – a bow stroke that begins off the string, and by which the entire arm, led by the elbow, swings in a pendulum-like manner, drawing a semicircular shape (hence the 'banana'). (This is instead of approaching the string vertically from above – in Pergamenschikow's words, 'like a gramophone needle'.) The banana bow sets the string in motion at the lowest point of the curve (**example 1**). According to Rovner, Pergamenschikow adopted this idea from the violinist Sándor Végh, although it might have come from Ševčík's 40 Variations op.3 for the violin (arranged for the cello by Feuillard), where a curved, banana-shaped apostrophe indicates a bow lift.

If Gerhardt still starts his daily morning routine with the banana bow some thirty years after his last lesson with Pergamenschikow, there must be more to it than meets the eye. 'It teaches me the perfect bow control, although I've added some rules to it – I try to enter the string as gently and slowly as possible in different parts of the bow, without stopping, with completely flat hair and full arm weight. And preferably this is done on the C string, which is even harder than on other strings,' he says.



Nonetheless, Pergamenschikow's concept of the banana bow was not limited to bow strokes starting off the string, as Arp explains: 'Place the bow on the string, feel the resistance and pull the string as if by plucking it, drawing a line in the form of a banana – but not like those straight supermarket bananas!' Peled, who adapted this exercise for his students, sees it rather as a 'breathing bow'. He says, 'You create a vibrant sound, approaching the string from below.' Indeed, the elbow is very low at the moment the bow touches the string. He continues, 'The goal is first to learn how to create small bananas with the fingers, then extend them to the elbow, and finally to the shoulder.' Peled also noticed (and later adopted) one particular feature of Pergamenschikow's bow hold: 'Sometimes, he would place the right pinky on top of the stick, like a violinist. He didn't do it all the time and used it for repertoire up to Beethoven, I would say. That relationship between the first finger and the pinky gives the sound a focused and speaking quality.'

With Antoine Tamestit, Kronberg Academy, 2002

Pergamenschikow's example went far beyond music and cello playing, as all of his students unanimously agree. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he was a gentleman of the old school, inspiring musical integrity and mutual respect, always putting the composer's work at the forefront. 'He didn't belong to the countless egocentrics and narcissists that populate the artistic world today,' wrote his friend the violinist Gidon Kremer in 2008.

Pergamenschikow taught until his final days; he died on 30 April 2004, aged 55. His dedication to students is perhaps best illustrated in an anecdote shared by Peled, who once asked him: 'Why do you give us two-hour lessons when you are only supposed to give an hour and half?' Pergamenschikow replied: 'You know, Amit, after two hours, the student usually loses concentration, so I stop.' ●

With thanks to the Kronberg Academy (kronbergacademy.de) for providing archive photographs to illustrate this feature

PERGAMENSCHIKOW WAS A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL, INSPIRING MUSICAL INTEGRITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT

KRONBERG PHOTO LUTZ STERNSTEIN. KRONBERG ACADEMY. PORTRAIT PHOTO KLAUS RUDOLPH/SALZBURG FESTIVAL

X MARKS THE SPOT

For many years the design of the cello bridge has remained constant – but could it be improved? **Sebastian Gonzalez** presents the results of a comparison between the standard French bridge and a newly designed model, while on page 52 **Gaian Amorim** tracks the development of the bridge

A standard French-model cello bridge blank

The 'Model X' bridge designed by Luiz Amorim, in its final construction stages

FRENCH BRIDGE COURTESY MATTEO PONTIGGIA.
MODEL X BRIDGE COURTESY AMORIM FINE VIOLINS

The cello is a beautiful and complex instrument, known for its rich, deep sound. The bridge is an essential component of its structure, responsible for transferring the vibrational energy of the strings into the body and contributing significantly to the overall sound of the instrument. To achieve the best possible sound, the cello bridge needs to be light enough to transmit the movement of the strings efficiently, yet rigid enough to support the static load of the strings.

Throughout history there have been many attempts at designing the ideal cello bridge. Over time, luthiers have arrived at two standard models: the French and the Belgian. These designs have been refined over the years, but the basic principles remain the same. However, in recent times the Amorim family of luthiers in Cremona, Italy, has developed a new cello bridge design, which has garnered some attention in the music world.

Inspired by Amorim's fifth prototype of cello bridge, called the 'Model X' (see page 52), the research team at the Musical Acoustic Lab of the Polytechnic University of Milan conducted a study to investigate how much the shape of a cello bridge's legs alters its static and vibrational behaviour. We created 3D simulations of both a standard French model bridge and the Model X for the experiment. To study different geometries of

the bridge legs, we created simulations using the 'Finite Element Method'. This reduces complex shapes such as the bridge to make smaller 'elements' – multiple triangles, albeit 'finite' in number – which make up the volume of the object. The laws of physics can then be applied to them in the computer.

The experiment also involved parametric modelling, i.e. a design that can be controlled with one parameter – in this case the legs of the bridge. In **figure 1** the control point can be seen at point 'P'.

We performed displacement and modal analysis for different boundary conditions, providing a detailed description of the mode shapes and their natural frequencies for different leg shapes. The full study was recently published in the *Journal of Applied Sciences* in a special issue dedicated to the mechanics, dynamics and acoustics of musical instruments and can be found here: bit.ly/3T4wScP

Our simulations showed that changing the shape of the bridge legs resulted in a change in the apparent stiffness of the bridge. Specifically, we found that the variation in apparent stiffness has a linear dependence with the parameter controlling the shape variation of the legs. To measure the stiffness of the bridge, we applied a constant force on the location of the strings and computed the displacement of each point of the bridge along each of the three dimensions. These displacements are called u, v and w, respectively for the axes x, y and z defined in figure 1.

Figure 2 shows the absolute value of the displacement along x: |u| for the French (*left*) and the Model X (*right*). As can be seen, the legs in the French model splay far more than those of the Model X. We take the absolute value – the magnitude, not the sign of the displacement – as the legs move in opposite directions. The displacement in the vertical direction, v, is far more similar. The results presented here are for a force of 1 Newton and should be multiplied by a factor of around 400 to obtain the displacement under real strings, but the linearity of the model ensures that the spatial distribution of the displacement is the same.

Stiffness is defined as the ratio between displacement and force. Since all the models are subjected to the same load, we can compute the variation in stiffness simply by looking at the variation of the average displacement for different models. This is precisely what can be seen in **figure 3** (see page 53): we compute the average displacement along one direction for all the points on the bridge and divide that by the value obtained for the French model, <u_0>. The stiffer a model is, the less it will move under the same load. ▹

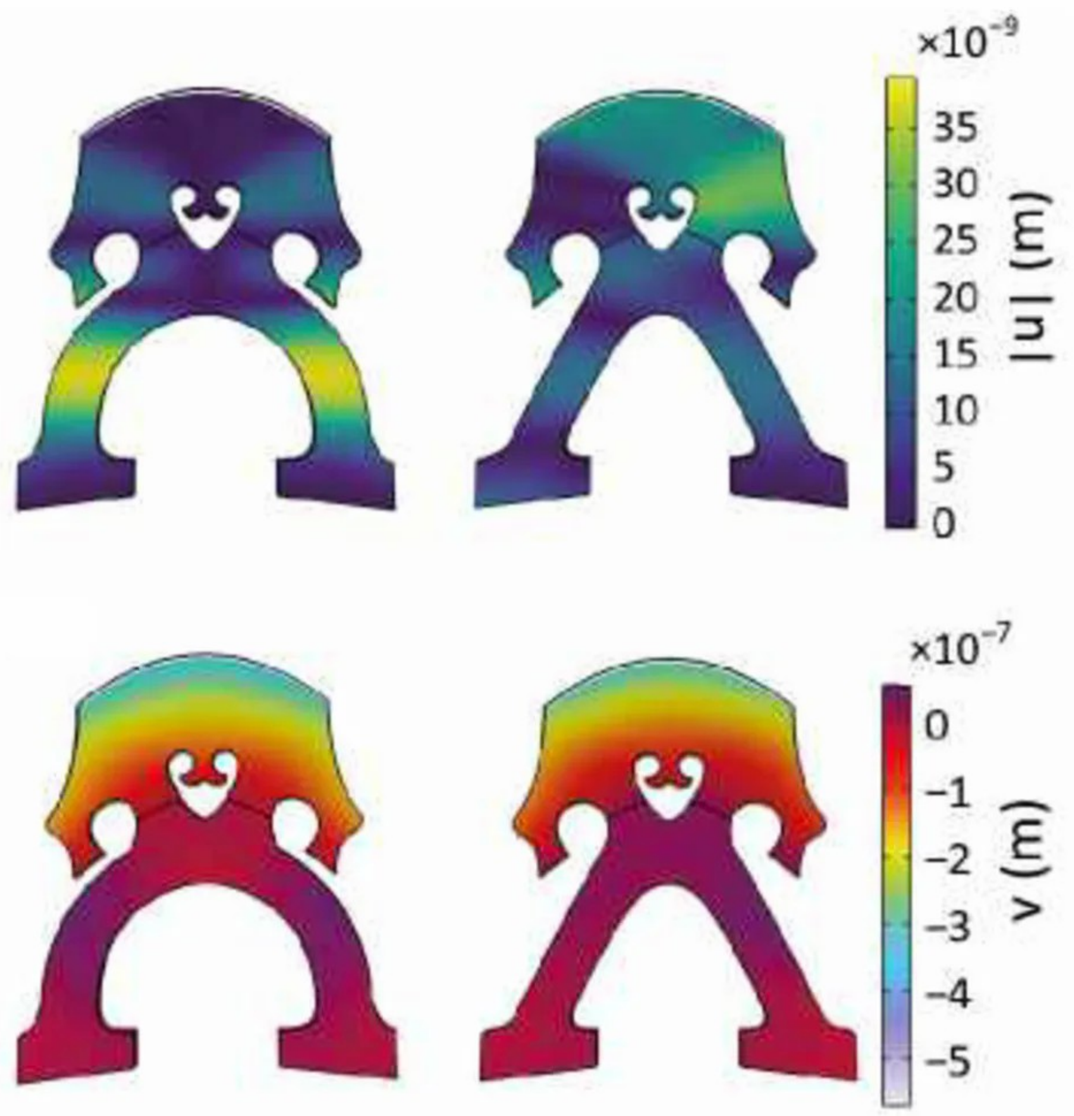


FIGURE 2 Displacement fields on each bridge under load. *Top* Magnitude of the displacement along the x axis. *Above* Displacement along the y axis

FIGURES 1 AND 2 COURTESY SEBASTIAN GONZALEZ

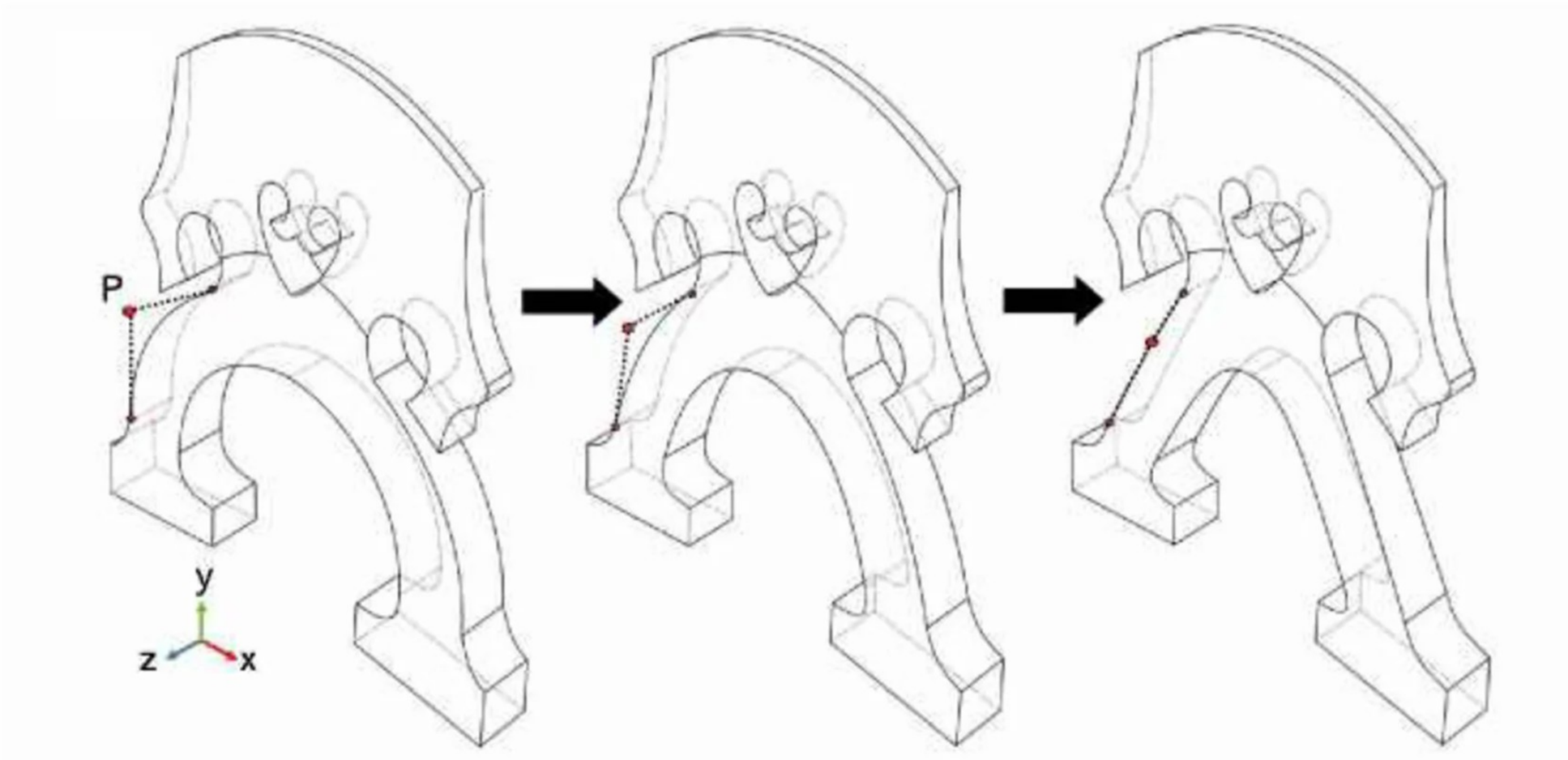


FIGURE 1 Three examples of the 3D model and its evolution. 'P' denotes the point at which we vary the control parameter of the legs.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'MODEL X'

A cello's bridge is an essential component in the quality of its sound. Traditional cello bridges contain many excess parts, such as long, decorative arms, which make the sound's transmission path longer than necessary. In contrast, the Model X features a shorter, more direct transmission path with less useless material. This allows for a quicker response and a more focused, crystal-clear sound.

The journey towards the Model X began in 2016 when a customer in the Amorim workshop showed Luiz Amorim an American research article suggesting that an X-shaped bridge format could give the best sound results for a cello. This starting point gave Amorim and his team the inspiration they needed to experiment.

The first model was not fully X-shaped, but it was less curved than traditional models, and it already showed some improvement in sound quality. Amorim then experimented with two half-moon cuts instead of a heart-shaped cut, in order to achieve a more direct transmission (**figure 1**). Although the central strings benefited from this change, there was still excess material present in the bridge.

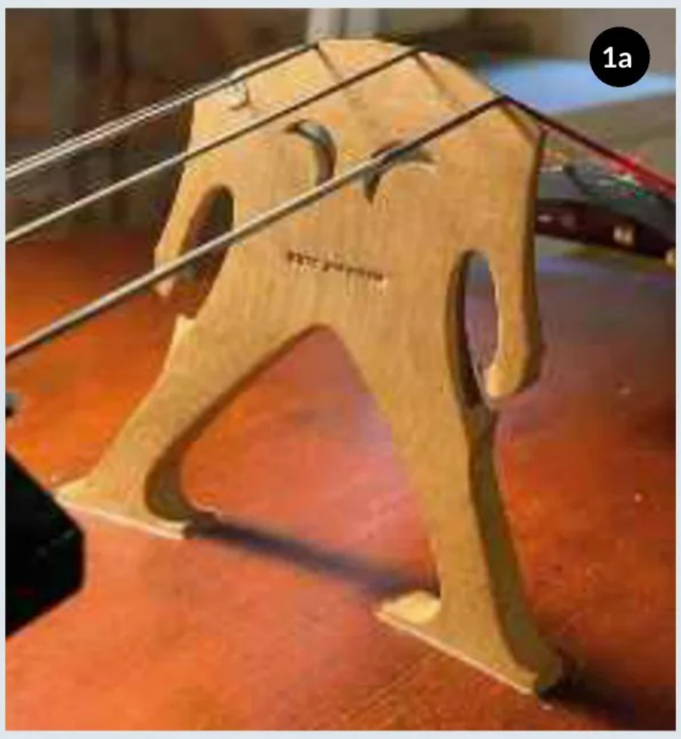
In the second model, the team focused on reducing material at the waist and creating more dynamic movement in the central area (**figure 2**). They brought back the central heart, which improved the brightness of the sound but caused a slight loss of quality in the central strings.

The third model featured shortened arms and a reduced central mass (**figure 3**). This was achieved by digging out the legs internally, creating a concavity and decreasing material in that area. This resulted in much better quality and power in the sound transmission while still maintaining speed.

Continuing to refine the design, in the fourth model the team further shortened the arms and increased the size of the heart while reducing the width of the upper region (**figure 4**). This produced an even better result, with a more pronounced difference in sound quality compared to the previous models.

The final model (**figure 5**) features a higher and more cross-shaped arch while maintaining shortened arms at the same height. The back and front parts of the legs gained an inclination, where the inner parts of the feet were thicker than the outer parts, creating a decrease in mass without compromising resistance. This has led to a significant improvement in sound quality, with the result being fully satisfactory.

The Model X has been used with many cellos, and the difference in sound quality compared to traditional models is significant. Customers experimenting with the Model X have reported that their instruments have more focus, power, and crystal-clear sound. The Model X is a testament to Luiz Amorim's commitment to finding ways to improve instruments, and his dedication to the craft of lutherie.



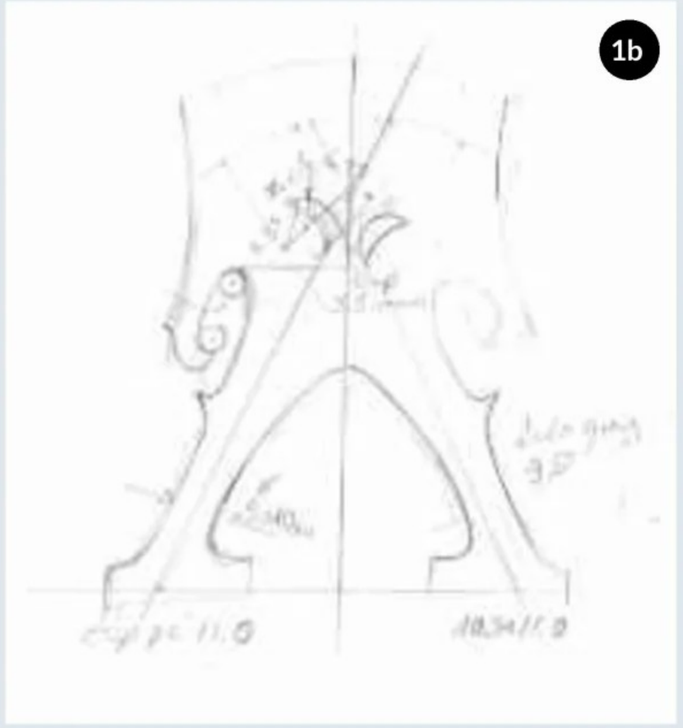


FIGURE 1 Photo and drawing of the first model, with half-moons instead of a heart-shaped cut

FIGURE 2 A model with more dynamic movement

FIGURE 3 Shortened arms and reduced central mass

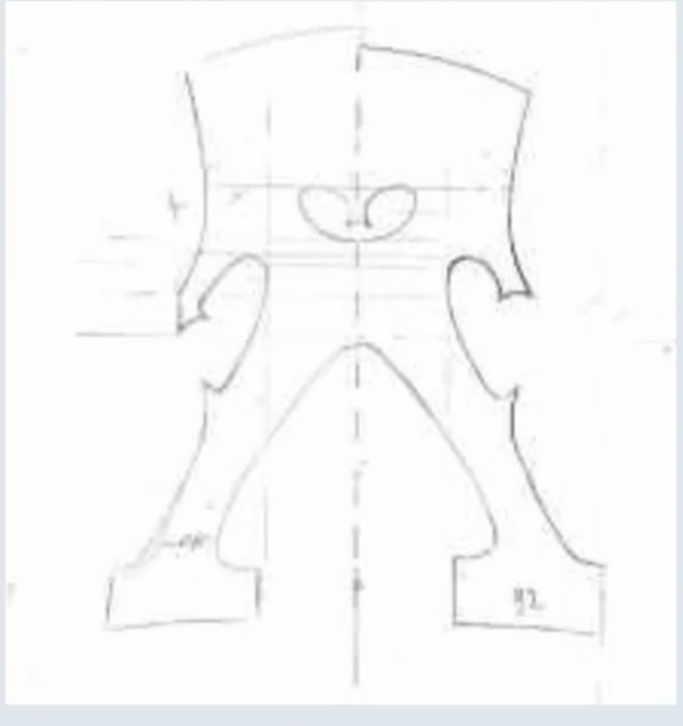


FIGURE 4 Reduced width in the upper region

FIGURE 5 The final Model X design

ALL IMAGES COURTESY AMORIM FINE VIOLINS

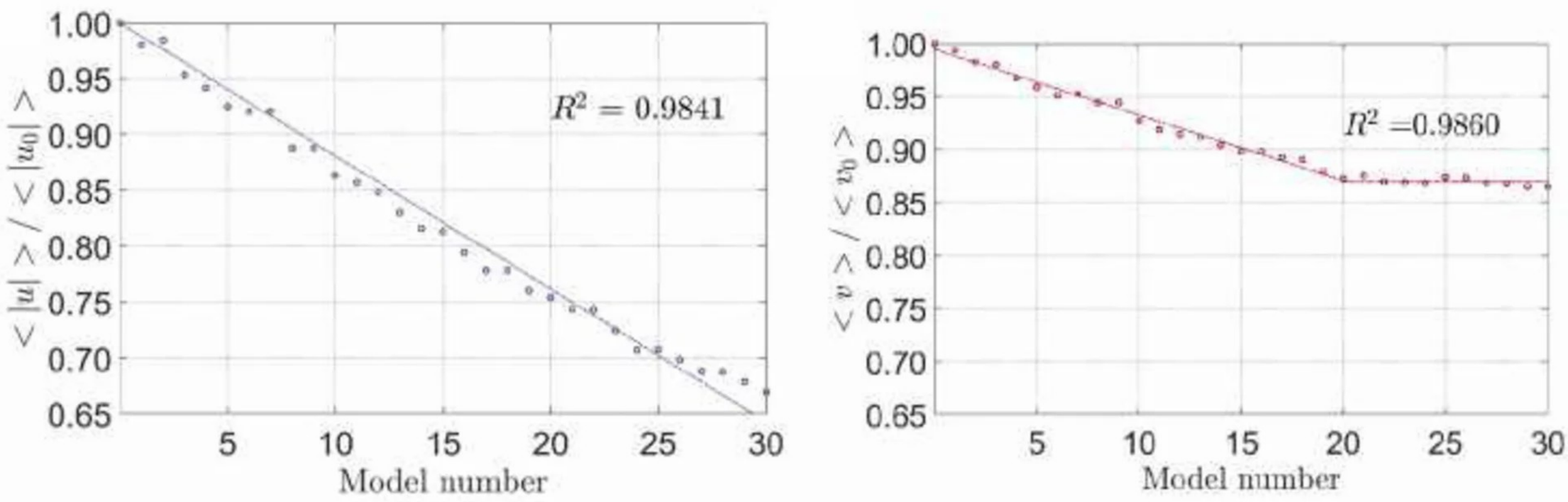


FIGURE 3 *Left* Spatial average of the displacement along the x axis, normalised for the French bridge, as a function of the model number. *Right* Spatial average of the displacement along the y axis, normalised for the French bridge, as a function of the model number. On both graphs, 'R^2' refers to the first portion of the fit, as the constant value in the second portion is the mean.

THE SHAPE OF THE BRIDGE LEGS CAN BE USED TO CONTROL THE VIBRATIONAL AND STATIC RESPONSES OF THE CELLO, AND THEREFORE TUNE ITS SOUND

The range of values of the stiffness reachable with this varying geometry corresponds to a 50 per cent increase in the vertical stiffness, and a 17 per cent increase in the horizontal stiffness between the traditional French and the Model X. This suggests that the shape of the bridge legs can be used to control the vibrational and static responses of the cello, and therefore tune its sound. In particular, thanks to the increase in the apparent stiffness of the bridge, it can be made lighter, helping the energy transmission from the strings to the corpus of the instrument. Furthermore, the stiffness in the x- and y-coordinates seems to be determined independently, from a certain angle of the legs.

Regarding the eigenmodes of the instrument, the results are a bit more complex to interpret. Depending on what boundary conditions we used (free, clamped on the feet, clamped with springs on the string location, or springs in the top and the feet of the bridge) the variation of frequencies was different. Some modes went up in frequency while others would go down, depending on the coupling between the springs and the bridge body. Stiffer legs don't necessarily mean higher frequency modes, as they can couple better with the strings and show lower frequency modes instead. All the modes and videos of them can be found in the online version of the article.

FIGURE 3 COURTESY SEBASTIAN GONZALEZ

Finally, we also computed and compared frequency response functions for the different geometries, but only under one boundary condition: fixed feet. Our results showed that the response in the mid-range can be continuously controlled by changing the geometric parameter and that distance between the third and fifth modes can also be controlled, as well as the amplitude of the admittance. This would allow an instrument maker to fine-tune the response of a cello in a particular frequency range without having to make structural changes to the instrument – only to the set-up.

However, an aspect that we have not studied in this article is the influence of design variations on the cello's sound and playability. We know that changing the shape of the bridge will shift the position of the modes in the so-called 'bridge hill' region, so we would expect a change in the mid-range components of the sound. According to the musicians who have tried the Model X, the cello has a faster response and is 'easier' to play. This points towards a change in the minimum bow force, owing to the alteration in bridge resonances. Accurately studying the force needed to play an instrument is an exciting open area of research, and other groups around the world (in particular in Vienna and Paris) are developing the scientific methodologies needed to achieve this. We are eager to apply those methodologies to this new bridge model.

In conclusion, the study of the influence of the shape of the legs of the cello bridge on its static and vibrational behaviour is an exciting development in the world of lutherie. The research provides valuable insights into how the shape of the bridge can be used to tune the sound of the cello, and highlights the potential of computational modelling and simulation in studying musical instruments. The study is an excellent example of the intersection between science and art, and demonstrates how advances in one field can have a profound impact on another when their proponents are willing to work together. ●

Sibelius's autographed photo to Maud Powell

G minor of Bruch. […] Not only is the solo part so wonderfully written for the instrument but the orchestration is superb. I hope to have a really sensational success with the Sibelius and am proud to be the first to play it in this country.'

Recognising the risk that Powell was taking, Sibelius responded: 'I am so very pleased to hear that you take interest in my violin concerto and will produce it in America. If I am going to have a good reception in New York, I am convinced it is to you I will owe the great part of the success.' He inscribed his photograph, 'To the Violin Queen, Miss Maud Powell, with gratitude – Jean Sibelius.' Powell had it framed for display in the window of G. Schirmer, New York's largest music shop. After the performances, in a letter dated 14 December, she wrote that she had made as much '*réclame* as possible', even playing the concerto in private, before critics, musicians and others, in order 'to create interest *and* understanding'.

The concerts took place at New York's Carnegie Hall. Bewildered New York critics commended Powell's artistry and courage in presenting the concerto but were uncertain of its lasting value. While recognising its originality, Krehbiel despaired that 'there are few opportunities for the violin to speak in tones of beauty, while the accompaniment is for the greater part either a mutter or a growl. Solo instrument and orchestra do not love each other in this new work' (*New-York Tribune*). Richard Aldrich (*New York Times*) wrote that Powell was 'working against odds too great' due to the work's 'paucity of ideas, its great length and almost unrelieved sombreness of mood'. William J. Henderson (*New York Sun*) excoriated it: 'This concerto is of the Finns, finny. It is of the North, rugged. It is of the Russ, rude. It is of the fiddle, technical. It is almost everything except beautiful […] It is bitter as gall and savage as wilderness.' He acknowledged that Powell played it superbly, 'But why did she put all that magnificent art into this sour and crabbed concerto?' Nevertheless, the audience let loose with a great ovation, and Saint-Saëns, who had listened 'most attentively', applauded heartily. Safonov shook Powell by the hand, and on 2 December wrote in a note to her, 'To conquer these almost insurmountable difficulties of technic and interpretation requires really an unusually artistic force.'

THE COMPOSER INSCRIBED HIS PHOTOGRAPH, 'TO THE VIOLIN QUEEN, MISS MAUD POWELL, WITH GRATITUDE – JEAN SIBELIUS'

Maud Powell in 1919

Powell sent the reviews to Sibelius, remarking in her 14 December letter: 'Alas, the work was not received as well as I could have wished. However, I have not lost courage and shall play it again with the splendid orchestra in Chicago, also in Cincinnati and I hope with the Boston Symphony under Dr Muck.' Still full of enthusiasm, Powell reassured him: 'The concerto went really *very well* and we had a most representative and distinguished audience. And I was proud to be "making history".'

With daring spirit, she went on to Chicago, Cincinnati and Boston. For the Chicago performances on 25 and 26 January 1907 she collaborated with Frederick Stock, successor to Theodore Thomas as conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. In sharp contrast to New York critics, O.H. Hall (*Chicago Daily Journal*) marvelled:

> The striking, original composition, racked by the vigour of the northland, has feverish moods fierce with the fire of the gypsy Czardas, weird, witching and involved, and is intensely violinistic. Miss Powell was at all times equal to the titanic task imposed, for the tournies of technic, remarkable as they were had an artistic alpha and omega in the soothing, savage and brilliant melodies that flow from her facile fingers, interpreting every phase of the composer's strange and variegated imagery in music.

The orchestra members 'followed with wonder at her amazing performance. She returned and repeated the last movement with a power and brilliancy that even surpassed her previous performance.' The *Musical Courier* wired back to New York: 'Great success for Maud Powell… Veritable ovation.' On 1 February, Powell wrote to Sibelius:

> I am happy to inform you of the triumph of the Concerto in Chicago. The conductor, Fred Stock, and the orchestra were all enthusiastic about it and played it wonderfully. Mr Stock belongs to our generation and worked in complete sympathy with the composition and with my interpretation. Wish you could have heard the performance. […] I am so overjoyed at the success – we really are to congratulate each other.

ALL PHOTOS AND IMAGES COURTESY OF THE MAUD POWELL SOCIETY

JOSEPH MARQUÈS

WRITTEN BY JORDI PINTO

The brothers Joseph and Salvador Marquès were born in Mataró, 18 miles north of Barcelona, to a family of cabinet makers. In the record books of the Brotherhood of St John the Baptist they are registered as guitar makers, together with many other trades relating to woodworking. They made an unknown number of instruments, which are of less importance than the ones of their contemporaries Joan Guillamí, Joseph Massaguer and Salvador Bofill. Currently there is only one known surviving violin by Joseph, in a private collection, and there is only half a violin back made by Salvador, which is kept at the Museu de la Música in Barcelona. (Conveniently, it is the half that still retains the label.)

Joseph's activities were directly related to the musical life around the Church of Santa Maria, where according to his will he was buried in 1770. In the inventory of Joseph's property his elder son, also named Joseph, received: 'the amount of only 25 pounds, as for many years I financially supported your studies while you were wasting money.' A younger son named Pere Anton received: 'a sum of money, a house, some tools, a stock of wood, patterns for making guitars and violins, three violin bows, a hank of black horsehair and a box containing violin, viola and guitar strings'.

- MAKER
JOSEPH MARQUÈS
- NATIONALITY
SPANISH
- BORN
1701
- DIED
1770
- INSTRUMENT
VIOLIN
- DATE
1759

INSTRUMENT AND MATERIALS

Made in 1759, this violin is still in its original Baroque condition. The top is made from fine, even spruce with some irregular grains, especially on the treble side. The one-piece back and sides are all made from nice, wild-flamed maple, while the original neck and scroll are of plain maple. All of it most probably came from the Pyrenees, as was the custom for 18th-century Catalan violin making. The general style and body outline is almost the same as those of instruments made by contemporary luthiers in Barcelona.

EDGEWORK AND PURFLING

There is no inlaid purfling; there are only two irregular lines of black ink around the edges, on both the top and the back. The corners are a little worn, but even though they are cut quite imprecisely, they have a simple and graceful delicacy.

F-HOLES AND ARCHING

The attractive f-holes are cut and designed with enthralling personality and elegance. The fluting of the edge is very short and the arching is quite low and gradual.

SCROLL

The scroll has a very thin chamfer and the carving of the turns is deep. The side view of the pegbox is slim: all of it is very close in style to what the contemporary maker Joseph Massaguer was doing in his own violins.

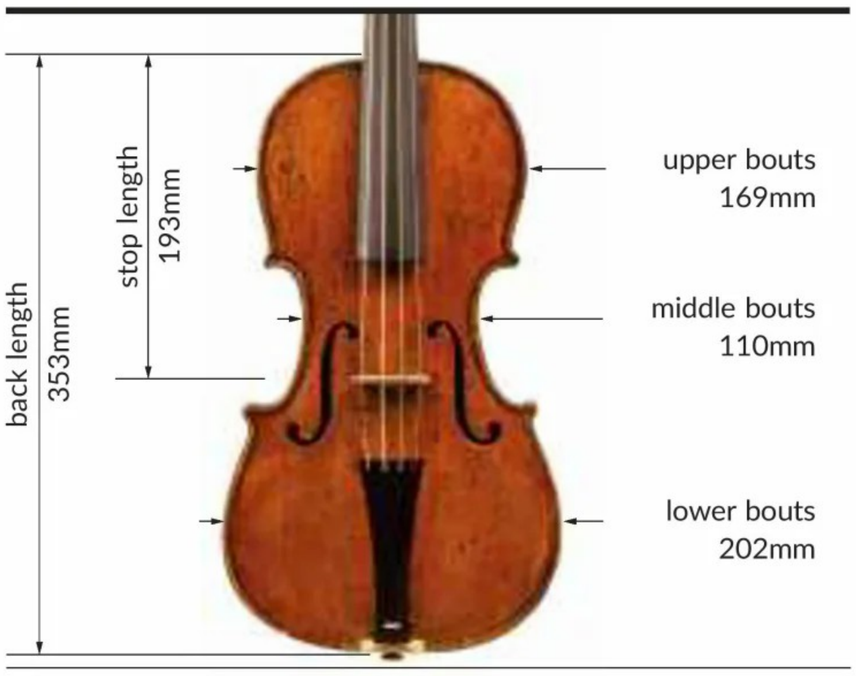
VARNISH

The varnish is of an orange–red colour, thickly applied over a yellow–gold ground. It was much admired and praised by the French expert Étienne Vatelot while on a professional visit to Barcelona in the 1990s.

LABEL

The label reads: 'Joseph Marquès Majó / en Mataró 1759'. Marquès added the word 'major/majó' after his name on the handwritten label and also on his will, to differentiate himself from his son. ▹

ALL PHOTOS JORDI PINTO



All measurements taken with a tape measure

Making a decorative fleur-de-lys

A method to add a striking decoration to the back of a Baroque instrument

BY EVAN DAVENPORT
Luthier based in Albuquerque, NM, US

When designing a fleur-de-lys decoration, the first step is always to decide on a design that works for you and best fits the instrument you are working on. For the double bass shown in this article, I based the pattern on the fleur-de-lys of the c.1609 Gasparo da Salò viola housed in the National Music Museum in Vermillion, SD, US. Having settled on that pattern, I extrapolated the rough placement of the decorations from those of the c.1580 Gasparo da Salò double bass (as featured on one of *The Strad*'s posters).

The template glued on the wood

1 I prefer to glue my paper template directly on to the wood using a thick hide glue. I avoid thin hide glues as they have been known to soak into the wood, which can cause bleach spots during the varnishing stages.

Once I have allowed my template to dry fully, I begin drawing in the lines that will connect the fleur-de-lys to the rest of the instrument's purfling.

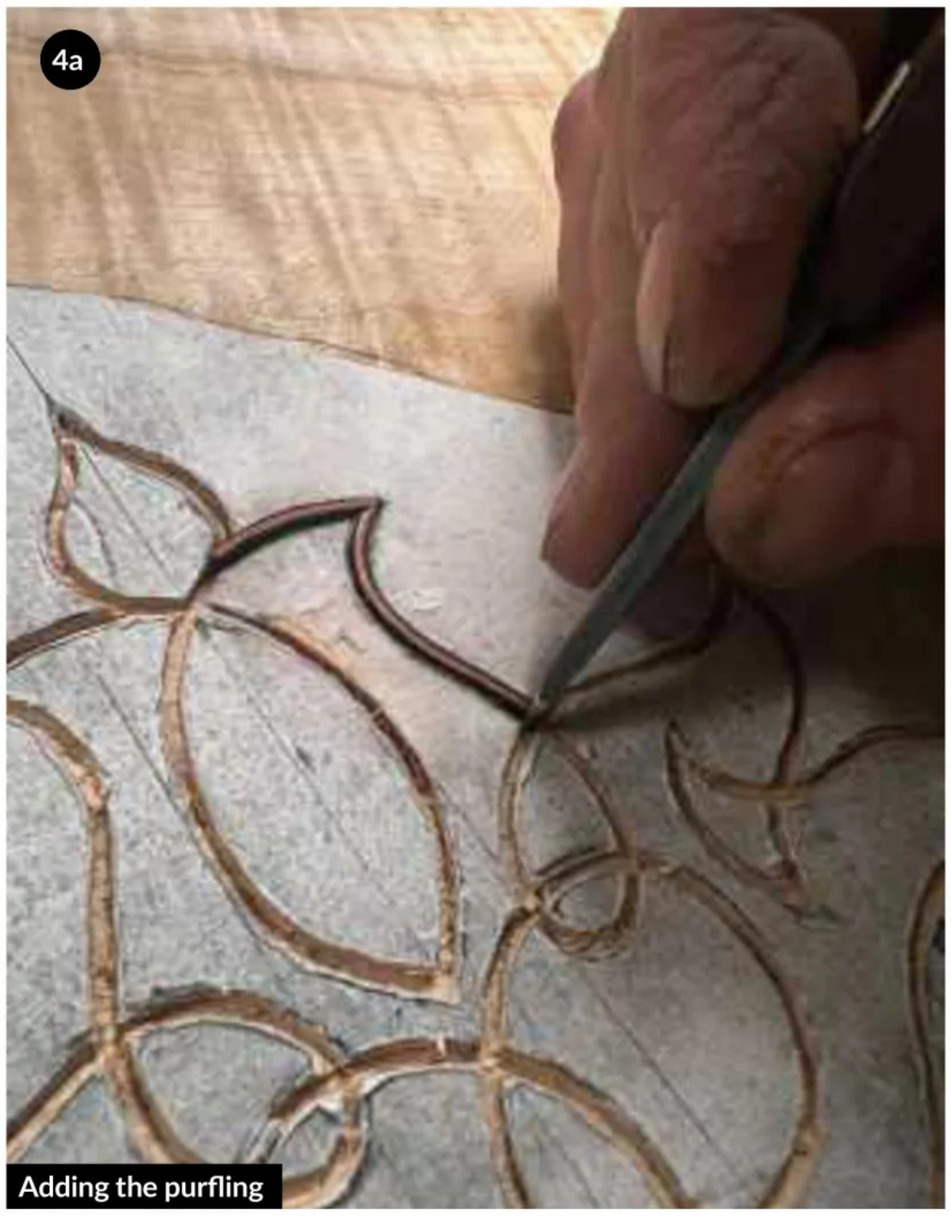
ALL PHOTOS EVAN DAVENPORT

Scoring the lines

2 When I am satisfied, I begin scoring either the outside or the inside line of purfling, following whichever line I feel is more important. Once I have carved the first score deeply enough, I come back and score the second line. At this stage I typically ignore the paper template and focus on keeping an equal distance from my first score.

The channels are cut out

3 Once I have established two equally deep grooves, I come through with a small chisel and carefully cut out the channel.



Adding the purfling

The first part is completed

4 After I have excavated every channel, I begin installing the purfling. I use a soldering iron with a variable temperature control as my bending iron for the tight radiuses of the purfling. I've found this to be the best tool for this job. I try to install the mitres in pairs, and allow the purfling to overhang areas that will cross underneath other purfling runs.

Once these are glued in, I come through with a knife and clean up any overlap, slowly working my way through the entire fleur-de-lys. ▹

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Purfling installed and scrubbed with hot water

5 I usually try to install all the purfling that will run 'underneath' first. If I can manage this, it will mean not having to do tight butt joints, which can often disrupt the line.

After slowly working through the design and adding all the purfling, I scrub the entire fleur-de-lys with hot water to remove any residual glue that was left behind during the installation process. I always wait to do this at the end of the procedure, otherwise there's a chance that the purfling channel might swell shut, preventing me from installing the purfling there. I then leave the fleur-de-lys overnight to let it dry fully.

The purfling trimmed down with a gouge

6a

The fleurs-de-lys after scraping

6b

6 Now for the best part. I come through with a gouge, and carefully trim down the purfling until it is just proud of the surface level of the plate. Finally I'll go over the whole design again with a scraper, and give the entire fleur-de-lys a final scrape. I scrape the area pretty heavily to ensure I have removed all glue residue.

I like to leave the paper template on the instrument until I am completely finished, as it helps keep fragile corners in place. If I do lose small chunks from the channel, I tend to leave them be. All this will be part of the style of the fleur-de-lys: if they are too clean, they have a tendency to look too factory-produced. This is why I allow some looseness in my lines.

7a

All four fleurs-de-lys complete

7b

The double bass back after varnish and antiquing

7 Finally, I connect the rest of my purfling channels and finish off the instrument.

One final word: don't be afraid to clean up lines if you are using a template of an old instrument. I don't go for symmetry, but I do want the lines to rhyme with each other.

MY SPACE

A peek into lutherie workshops around the world

LUTHIER

ELINA KALJUNEN

LOCATION

Helsinki, Finland

I've been at this workshop in Töölö, near the centre of Helsinki, for almost eight years. Before that, for more than a decade I was around three miles away from the centre, where the workshop took up the ground floor of my house. The area was nice, but when the bad weather came in the winter, the snowploughs never made it to my street – which wasn't very good for my customers, who sometimes had to battle through two feet of snow to reach me! Being central is much better for me now, as I'm very close to the Sibelius Academy and the home venues of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra and the Finnish National Opera and Ballet. The railway station is also nearby, which is convenient for my customers who come from around Finland and abroad.

I try to manage my time so that half of it is spent on repair work, maintenance, set-up, sound adjustment and bow rehairing, while the other half is for making new instruments. Most of the instruments hanging up are made by me, some of them dating from my time at the Cremona School. I've played the violin since I was five, and while in Cremona I spent two years learning the viola and another two studying the cello. So I can try out all the instruments I make, and I've played in string quartets ever since I was a student. Helsinki is a very musical city and I'm delighted to be able to work with so many fellow string players in the vicinity.

The workshop is around 30 sq m and I do almost everything in this one room. The only exception is the bathroom where, since it attracts the least amount of dust, I have my UV cabinet for drying varnish. The centrepiece is the large window, which is essential for bringing natural light into the workshop. Sometimes in the winter, the light in Helsinki is so poor that I'll hold over some tasks such as varnish retouching until I have better weather.

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

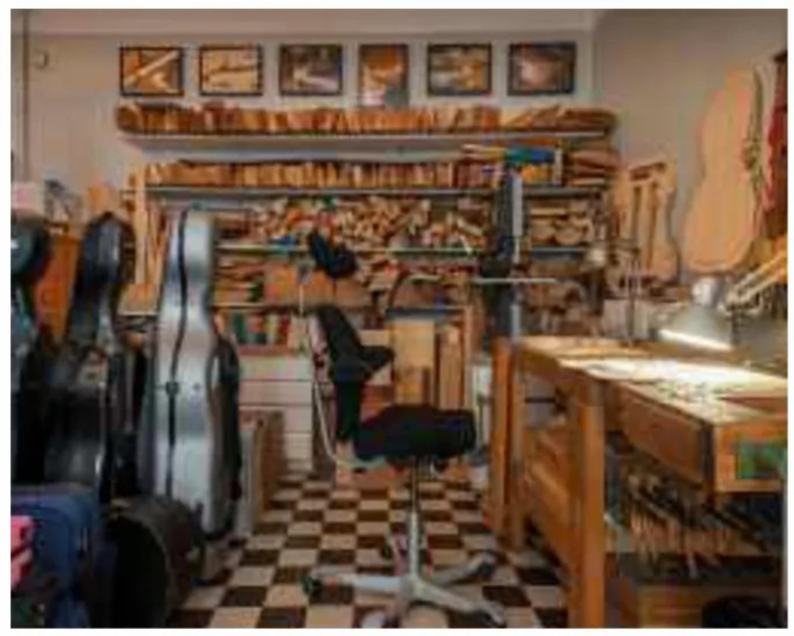
This mould is made on a Stradivari model, although it's not one I regularly use. My normal moulds have larger holes, to make it easier for me to remove the rib garland once it's finished.

I'm currently working on a violin by Gioffredo Cappa owned by the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, which requires new tuning pegs. There's also a Baroque violin, probably German-made, which needs polishing, sound adjustment and a new soundpost.

ALL PHOTOS TUOMO MANNINEN

I have my main workbench in front of the large window, as it lets in lots of natural light. I have all my bridges hanging up in the window for seasoning; I think it's nice for them to get some colour in them.

Right This is another section of the same room, where I keep some of my wood and work on new instruments. At present I'm carving the top and back plates for a five-string violin, which I'm making for a contemporary music specialist.



I take inspiration from all the photos of fine instruments that I have around the workshop. The one on the window is a 1713 Girolamo Amati II violin in the collection of the Royal Academy of Music, which I've copied several times.

I'm a member of the Guild of Finnish Luthiers, which put together an exhibition in 2022 to coincide with the Sibelius International Violin Competition. We currently have twelve members and meet regularly to discuss the facets of our trade.

Cultivating wisdom

The ability to identify the maker of a bow is a rare talent that requires a keen eye and a wealth of knowledge. **Jacques Poullot** gives some pointers as to how to acquire such expertise

A wealth of books are available for bow devotees to improve their expertise

French bow making as we know it today dates back to the 1780s with the pioneering work of François Xavier Tourte. To understand the progression of bow making in France, and indeed throughout Europe, we must therefore be familiar with almost 250 years of historical practice. Starting with the adoption of pernambuco as the principal bow wood and the standardisation of the main models (apart from those used by double bassists), it is possible for us to recognise the different bow makers from times past.

Before that time, bows were made either by the instrument makers themselves, or by anonymous craftsmen. They were considered mere accessories, the same as cases, rosins and pegs. Indeed, for a long time bow makers in Mirecourt were nicknamed *accessoiristes* by their luthier colleagues, who never hid their disdain for our noble profession. It took quite a while before specialist bow makers could garner the same kind of reputation and success enjoyed by their peers in the violin making world.

Equally, there were few luthiers or dealers who took much interest in bows and bow makers. In the first years of the 20th century Charles Nicolas Bazin was still selling bows from his Mirecourt workshop by the dozen, and even by the gross. As a consequence, knowledge of individual bow makers and their craft was sparse, and it was up to a few passionate individuals to use their expertise to put together the first reference works for bows. There were those, such as Pierre Vidoudez in Geneva, who produced catalogues to present their collections or the new bows produced in their workshop. These have been moderately useful for enthusiasts, but the photos were always in black and white.

The earliest known serious work on bows and bow making was Chicago collector Joseph Roda's *Bows for Musical Instruments of the Violin Family*, published in 1959. This was followed 17 years later by Étienne Vatelot's *Archets français* and in the 2000s by Millant and Raffin's *L'archet*. This was a logical continuation and extension of Vatelot's work, although it was organised chronologically rather than, as in the earlier work, alphabetically.

These volumes are invaluable reference sources, but nothing compares to the oral transmission of knowledge or one's own personal experience of hundreds of bows. I used to be astounded when I saw colleagues trying to recognise a bow maker's work by putting the bow on top of a picture in the Vatelot book! It is essential to write notes in large notebooks, take photos and make sketches, as a drawing helps you memorise the forms and outlines. Assessing the quality of the materials used, identifying the gestures of fast-working makers who repeated the same process so many times – this is the

Jacques Poullot at work on one of his own bows

path to true expertise. Also, attempting to copy a particular bow allows one to understand how each maker used their tools. And dismantling a bow for restoration is often as useful as examining its external appearance: we can recognise the little habits of each maker, from pencil lines to the cleanliness (or not) of the internal workmanship, to the positioning of the mortise and so on.

In addition, one must keep in mind the historical circumstances and living conditions of each artisan. A bow maker who worked at Vuillaume's workshop in Paris was well treated and earned a decent living, whereas in Mirecourt everyone went from one workshop to another, just to earn a few extra centimes a week and improve their daily lives.

KEEP IN MIND THE HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF EACH MAKER

Branding their bows was not widespread either, as the fine ironwork needed to make the brands was a very specialised practice. For this reason, we need to find other ways of dating bows.

For example, there was a period in Mirecourt, around 1925–30, when the buttons were finished in pernambuco rather than ebony, which had become rare. This can help date the bow and narrow down the possible makers. The other day a dealer asked me why there was a very marked drop in the quality of pernambuco among French makers around 1850. In reply, I sent him a maritime map of the slave route from Le Havre to Recife in Brazil, and explained that once the slaves had disembarked, the empty ships had to have ballast, and took with them stocks of the heavy, resaleable pernambuco wood. This was mainly for making red dye, but also bows. The abolition of slavery in 1848 put an end to this odious traffic, and thus created a shortage of pernambuco.

Finally, it is useful to bear in mind the three categories that French experts use to estimate a bow's value. Category 1: a bow entirely made by the person named on the brand (or at least largely; for example C.N. Bazin, who made all the heads himself). Category 2: a bow made in the signatory's workshop, under his direction. This is valued at 50 per cent of a Category 1 bow. Category 3: a bow from 'the school of' the signatory, i.e. made by a student, or students of a student. This has a value of 25 per cent of Category 1. ●

TRANSLATION BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD

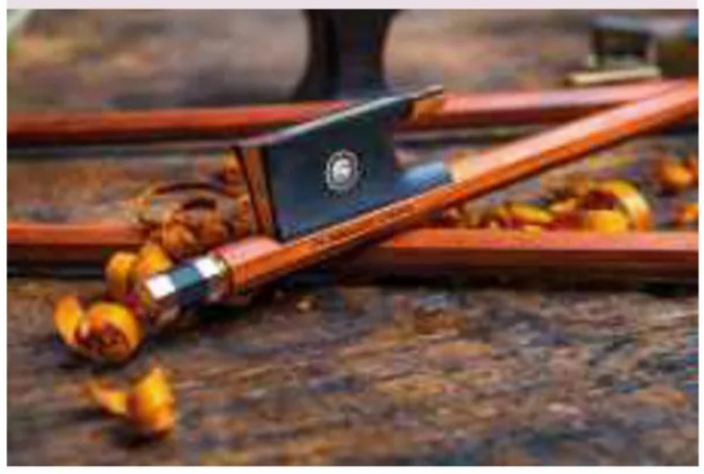
IDENTIFYING A BOW MAKER

To recognise the maker of a bow, I can recommend a short, logical sequence of points to check.

- First of all, check the consistency of the work between the tip and the heel; the quality of the pernambuco and ebony; the quality and deftness of the workmanship
- Examine the shape of the head, and whether the face plate is flat or rounded. Look at the frog: its dimensions and shape, and whether the slide, and whether the eye is Parisian or not
- Is the button long, short, tapered or not?
- Most importantly: never focus on the brand, but on the general impression

The second stage is to look at the different aspects of the bow in more detail, considering the bow's geographical origin and time period. Both your memory and your gut feelings are important here.

- Examine the head in more depth: work on the sides, face plate and the working of the chamfers
- Check mortises, forms, distance, depth
- Confirm with the details and criteria that you are sure of

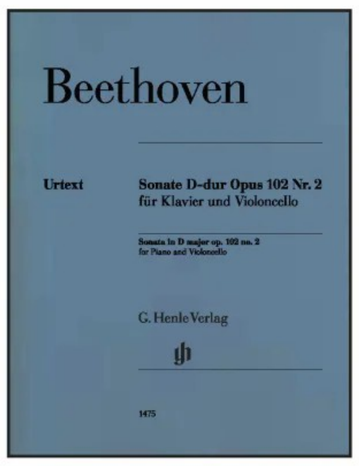


ALL PHOTOS JACQUES POULLOT

MASTERCLASS

BEETHOVEN CELLO SONATA NO.5, SECOND AND THIRD MOVEMENTS

Cellist **Gary Hoffman** considers the importance of context to understand and appreciate this work, written in 1815 during a period of isolation and difficulty for the composer



From Beethoven Cello Sonata no.5 in D major op.102 no.2. Urtext edition with marked and unmarked string parts. Ed. Jens Dufner. Pf fingering Ian Fountain. Vcl fingering and bowing David Geringas. Order no. HN 1475. ISMN 979-0-2018-1475-9. €9.00. Printed with permission of G. Henle Verlag, München © 2020

Playing this sonata as part of the collection of Beethoven's five for cello and piano, in concerts over many years, has given me a sense of what it meant to Beethoven. His Fourth and Fifth cello sonatas are often regarded as difficult to interpret because of their complexity and an introspective quality, but as part of his journey in writing for cello and piano they represent a definitive conclusion to his mastery of the genre.

I'm convinced Beethoven would not have thought when writing the first sonatas in 1796 that a fugue with cello and piano were possible. And neither did he appear to consider exploiting the singing nature of the cello in a slow movement. But in the Third Sonata we can hear he is conceiving the ways in which these two instruments can function happily together in a certain world of sonorities, and he continues to develop his compositional ambition for the combination, apparently recognising the need to write a whole slow movement and a fugue as his final contribution to the genre.

Choices and interpretation

Coming to learn this piece, one would expect to have played at least Beethoven's Third Sonata and to have immersed oneself in fugues from his contemporaneous piano sonatas and the late string quartets, so that the choices of bow stroke, bowing and phrasing, vibrato and fingering would not be arbitrary but would serve one's best understanding of the music. It's not that we have to make a choice one way and live with it. In fact, I find it more authentic to leave bowing and fingering choices to suit the moment, i.e. the performance space, the audience and how I feel, hence playing from an unmarked part. The crucial thing is to have an awareness of how your part fits within the whole.

THE SOLOIST

NAME
GARY HOFFMAN

NATIONALITY
AMERICAN

STUDIED WITH
RUDOLF KOELMAN

RECORDS FOR
HÄNSSLER CLASSIC, ORCHID CLASSICS

'It's not about passing ideas back and forth but about everything constantly developing'

Gary Hoffman and David Selig will be performing the complete cello sonatas by Beethoven on 1 and 2 June in Madrid. Their recording of Beethoven's Complete Sonatas and Variations for cello and piano has recently been released on La Dolce Volta and is available on all good streaming platforms.

BERNARD MARTINEZ

Austere beginnings

At the beginning, for example, although we are playing the top line in the chorale, ours is only one voice out of three or four and so we have to be aware of how much vibrato we use, if any, so that the cello sounds as one with the piano rather than drawing attention to itself. There's also a certain hush to these bars – I picture monks walking through an abbey – which perfectly sets up the more outwardly expressive theme from bar 9, for which there can be a distinct change in vibrato.

Morphing and evolving

It's interesting in bar 13 that Beethoven has the cello take up an accompanying idea from the piano part in the preceding lyrical phrase and uses it to 'commentate' on the chorale in the piano. This idea is in turn adopted in the right hand of the piano as a commentary on the chorale from bar 20, and what started as an ostinato figure has taken on a different role. All of this creates a constantly morphing musical progression. It's not about passing ideas back and forth but about everything constantly developing.

Hope and despair

At the change of key from minor to major into bar 25 and vice versa at bar 51 it is tempting to let the tempo move on, but to me that kind of change is disturbing. If you alter the tempo you alter something fundamental. It's like looking at the same scene but in a different mood. One moment the sun may come out, in another there's a chill wind but what is underneath doesn't actually change. The tempo is the unifying factor throughout the movement and Beethoven has gone to great lengths to write that kind of motion, fluidity or change of character into the music.

Heavenly music

The espressivo marking of the music from bar 29 is more to reflect its inherent nature than a direction for the performer to play in any exaggerated way. Beethoven has already created the context within which this section sits with the severe, grave quality of the opening and it's clear to me that here, the music breaks free of that. It's possibly the place where we reach the greatest levels of nuance and dynamic change, but it has always fascinated me that there is not one marking above *piano* either here or in the rest of the movement. While there are crescendos and espressivos marked, the soft dynamics and lack of resultant dynamics reflect the introspective conception of the piece. The music never completely opens out and to my mind it is for us to reach 'upwards' rather than outwards here and in similar places like bar 70.

With the return to the minor in bar 51 comes the restatement of the chorale theme in the piano while the cello adapts the ostinato figure from bar 13 to make its commentary out of these dotted figures. And in bar 59 the restatement of the espressivo theme from bar 7 is this time accompanied by both the dotted figures and the off-beat triplets ( ) that develop from bar 42. Continually developing, it builds to a point of culmination and what follows from bar 67 is like a vision of something beyond our existence. Bars 67 and 68 are one place where the phrase mark works directly as a bowing, making one long bow over two bars. There need not be anything active in our playing: it should sound astonishingly different.

Transitional ambiguity

The music only reanimates itself in the Allegro where, although it effectively resolves to D major, the four-bar section raises more questions than it answers and seems to me to be part of the transition that began at the end of the slow movement. We hear the cello and piano passing a thematic idea between them but we don't yet know it is going to be a fugue, and as listeners we don't even know whether it's in three time or four time. Beethoven only marks Allegro fugato when it seems that the ambiguity is resolved, and it becomes clear that the music from bar 5 is the subject of a fugue that will now surely follow.

Articulation and interplay

Different editions will make different assumptions based on an autograph, which presumably does not contain all the intended articulation marks. So, as performers we have to make our own judgements, bearing in mind that this edition records as accurately as possible what is in the autograph, with editorial suggestions kept to a minimum on the music. The staccatissimo (wedge) markings are part of the character throughout the fugue but the fact that they are marked on every quaver ( ) in bar 35 but not in bar 5, for example, indicates Beethoven intended there to be a difference.

Whatever bow strokes and articulation we choose, we must always be cognisant of the interplay with the piano, especially the frequent dialogue with its left hand. After all, we only have one voice so most of the fugue is happening elsewhere. We have to hear it, feel it and be inside it, and aspects such as articulation and colour must be in the piano's world as much as the cello's. Amid the intricate counterpoint, places such as bars 67–72 where cello and piano move together in rhythmic unison are particularly interesting, and because he marked sforzandos Beethoven meant them to be highlighted.

If the music starts to dissipate from bar 90 to the most delicate statement of the subject from bar 102 then it gathers energy again from bar 114 until it is spent and has to give way to something new in bar 143.

Music from the moon

This music that sounds like it came from the moon provokes the wrapping-up of all that came before. I imagine, although I am not suggesting Beethoven was consciously stating this, that it concludes all that came since his First Cello Sonata. He goes through a huge evolutionary process in these five sonatas: the aspect of how to treat the cello, how to treat cello and piano together, and how to put the two instruments in the same world so that what they can express as an entity goes far beyond the notion of each individual instrument. That he reverts back to an early form, the fugue, to finish it all is a fitting signal of his final years. It is as if his whole life is represented in this collection of works. ▹

INTERVIEW BY HELENA RUINARD

Bars 1-8: Consider that while the cello is the top voice it is only part of the chorale.
Therefore choose vibrato that allows for the closest match with the piano sound.

this figure is the cello commentary on the chorale in the piano

52 *pp* *pp*

56 *pp* *espressive*

61 *cresc.* *dimin.* *p* *pp*

after building from bar 42, the music reaches a point of culmination in bar 66

Bars 67-68: One bow keeps tension and sets proper context for the last series of 'rises to the above'

68 *sempre pp*

77 *p* *pp* *pp* *sempre pp* *attacca l' Allegro*

although no dots are written, choose a light bow stroke with some separation that will best match the piano in bars 3 and 4

Allegro *p* *leggiermente*

1

Allegro fugato *sempre piano*

9

in some editions, staccatissimo on crotchets in bar 17 but not bar 18 – could be Beethoven's intentional markings as cello goes beneath piano, and we need a foundation to the sound

16 *sempre piano*

because cello and piano material continues in a similar way for four bars from bar 26, continue with staccatissimo articulation

23 *cresc.* *p* *cresc.* *p* *cresc.*

articulation here should sound different from the beginning

32 *dolce* *sfp* *sfp* *sempre piano*

41 *cresc.* *f* *p*

49 *cresc.*

*Bar 143: cello solo, like a voice from another universe. This is Beethoven at his most philosophical.

**Although some editions mark a double-stop in bar 143, given its awkwardness and that there is already a B in the piano, most cellists choose to play a single F sharp

154

sfp *sfp*

Bars 169-173: another moment where cello line is in rhythmic unison with piano left hand

164

cresc. *f*

173

(p)

181

cresc. *ff* *sf* *sf*

up-beat to bar 194, piano trill signals final chapter

190

sf *dimin.*

198

p *dimin.* *pp*

208

cresc.

214

f dimin. *p*

220

cresc. *f* *sf*

229

ff *sf* *sempre ff*

236

A

TECHNIQUE

Core values

Embody and inhabit your sound

MATTHEW SHARP

Solo cellist, operatic baritone and professor of cello at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, UK

BORN
Lisbon, Portugal

STUDIED WITH
Julia Pringle, Kate Beare, Alexander Baillie, Boris Pergamenschikow

TEACHES
Undergraduates, post-graduates, professionals, all ages

Singing is a fundamental and elemental part of what it is to be human; the ability to sing and thereby to express ourselves lies within every one of us. Playing a stringed instrument is similar to singing – we work with breath, flow and imagination 'from the inside out'. The more I teach, the more I ground my work in vocal and movement-based terms. In my own playing I have found that there is something about the act of singing as honestly and expressively as possible that leaves a trace of physiological wisdom behind it to pick up on and carry forward into the act of playing the cello. This helps me and my students to zone in on and nurture the 'grain of the voice' in the cello sound.

We have all heard the excellent 'play it like a singer' advice offered to students. We have also heard and seen the kind of unembodied 'di-dum' vocal demonstrations that frequently accompany and undermine this good advice. In terms of accessing and benefiting from the innate sense of cello playing and musical wisdom coursing through our veins, what I prefer to do in this scenario is to encourage students to take the risk of not 'di-dumming' but *really* singing a phrase, for example, on a firm, bright vowel ('ah' or 'eh'). This way they can experience the phrase in terms of breath, support and connecting one sound to the next. I follow this by helping them to explore ways to transfer this physiological and intuitional experience to the cello.

Essentially there are things about instinctive music making that transcend technical analysis. As a listener I don't want to hear 'cello playing' – in the same way as I don't go to the ballet to watch steps and exercises to music. Working towards the end of transcending the craft, I encourage students to search for and feel more flow and more connection with the sound to lift the audience up; I find that internalised vocal and movement-based experiences act as guides and facilitators for their playing going forward. Discovering, trusting and accepting the uniqueness of each voice is particularly important in a world that has increasingly favoured the generic.

MINDSET

Before sitting down to play the cello, bring your whole being to life. I like to warm up five fundamental qualities: breath, body, voice, pleasure and spirit. Keep refreshing these throughout your practice; pleasure, in particular, can get lost amid the notion of the daily grind, and there is no music without it. Think extension and expansion – feet in the wet sand, sunshine on the chest, olive oil in the joints and length through the spine.

EXERCISES AWAY FROM THE CELLO

- Take any physical exercise you like, as long as it gets you moving and raises your heart rate. Star jumps work well; keep a spring in your step, land lightly (remember the olive oil and don't crunch those vertebrae). As you jump, imagine you are wiping a windscreen behind you. This helps engage the plane of the back (often forgotten in the forward-tending dynamic of cello playing and

MATILDE HOLLOWAY

fundamental for a radiant sound and keeping healthy shoulders). There's no need to power through; be mindful in what you do.

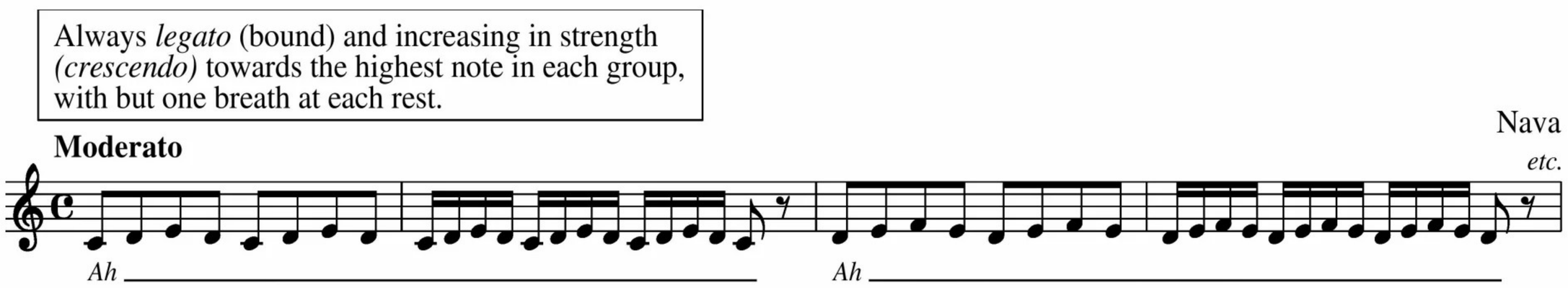
- Getting moving is a simple way to awaken breath, body and spirit, develop strength and flexibility and unlock momentum and e-motion (my shorthand for emotion and motion) in your playing. See my Riseshiner cello warm-ups on YouTube at bitly.ws/38rBF
- Take this flowing, open, oxygenated state into your cello playing; the 'work' involved in practice is about connection with and upliftment of an audience, so aim to approach it with an open, flowing state of mind

VOCAL EXERCISES

The more you can align yourself with making sound within yourself, the better chance you have of producing a sound on something outside yourself in an authentic, powerful, expressive and meaningful way.

- Not everyone feels comfortable singing but there are five short and basic vocal warm-up exercises by the 19th-century pedagogue Gaetano Nava that I do daily and encourage my students to sing. As they do, I encourage them to think of qualities of release in their bodies – the jaw, the tongue, the pelvis area, and to take risks with the brightness and openness of their singing as they do the exercise. Each exercise is done to a different vowel sound (ah, eh, oh, ee, oo). See **exercise 1**.
- Sirens and lip trills are a way in for more reluctant students and are also a useful way of freeing up the voice ready for work

EXERCISE 1 During this exercise I encourage students to think of qualities of release in their bodies



REPERTOIRE

To help a new student start to amplify the strength, flexibility and sense of flow in their playing I find it important to be student-led in terms of repertoire. Many students are coy about this, being reluctant to suggest music that they love in case it isn't standard cello repertoire and/or will be judged by the taste police as lacking validity in some way. Sometimes they just haven't admitted to themselves that they love Take That. It is worth persevering (sometimes by revealing that you love something really quirky or niche) because to address this new way of thinking, the music should genuinely make them want to sing and dance, whether it is Bach, Zimmer or Beyoncé. Remember, too, that choices might change from day to day.

Later on, if a student must perform specific repertoire, the demands of that music become paramount. But the experience of increased individual connection with favourite music should carry through and affirm the individuality of voice elsewhere.

Personally, when I play the theme of the Tchaikovsky *Rococo Variations* (**example 1**) I imagine that I am inhabiting the character of Monsieur Triquet from his opera *Eugene Onegin* (**example 2**). ▹

EXAMPLE 1 The beginning of Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations*

SEIT 1798

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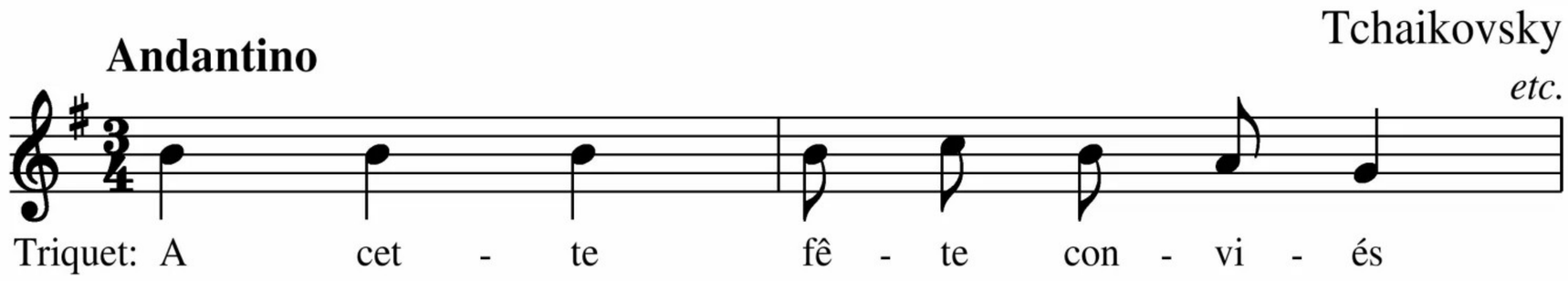
Gary Hoffman

Photo Credit © William Beaucardet

EXAMPLE 2 An excerpt from Tchaikovsky's opera *Eugene Onegin*



Monsieur Triquet is a cameo role (he is a French tutor) who comes on and sings in praise of Tatiana, who was Tchaikovsky's favourite character. I go into my virtual dressing-up box and sing the couplets that he sings with all the curlicues that are part of his character. Then I feel that I can channel a genuine rococo spirit rooted in Tchaikovsky.

IN YOUR PRACTICE

- Warm up as described above
- Identify areas that you would like to improve and, guided by your intuition and any knots and resistances in your body and technique, invent extra warm-ups, always being aware that these should be based in sound, which inevitably carries everything you do:

1. On the right-hand side of the body, be aware of articulation, string-crossings and bow changes
2. On the left-hand side of the body, be aware of articulation, vibrato and shifts

- Work on anything functional that your teacher has given you (such as the left-hand articulation from the base joint etc.)
- Keep mindful and creative in scale practice. One way of doing this is by starting and finishing a scale on the lowest available note on the instrument (for example, play G major starting and finishing on open C). Use these scales as a tool for improvisation. This will further connect your inner voice with the cello, because improvisation asks that you say 'yes' to what is arising 'right now', whether you think you like it or not.
- You may extend this by working out, say, a G major 7th arpeggio. Then find a pulse and, with the metronome ticking, play notes from that arpeggio on every quaver (♪). When this is going along well, check in with your sound and make sure that it hasn't become a casualty in the process.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Your studio should be a safe, creative space; students need to feel open to risk-taking, especially with singing. You may find the following quote helpful: 'Perfectionism brings out the worst in everyone.' (With thanks to my father, John Sharp.)
- Help your students to see things through the positive end of the telescope when learning something new; the analogy of learning another language may be useful (for example, if you are English and trying to learn French you already know 45 per cent of the vocabulary involved)
- For advanced students who have been sitting with the cello for years, and who wish to find more release and flow in their playing, work without the cello to help them find what their bodies have within them. Encourage them to go beyond the edge in terms of release and risk, so as not be limited by that awkward bit of wood.
- Teach yourself out of a job by helping students solve problems for themselves

INTERVIEW BY NAOMI YANDELL

FURTHER MATERIALS

How I Play, How I Teach by **Paul Tortelier**. This book is a model of pedagogy, brimming with rigour and creativity. I particularly like the left-hand fourth-finger workouts.

True and False by **David Mamet** includes the quote 'Speak up, speak clearly, unfold your body' and other pragmatic and profound nuggets of advice.

NEXT MONTH
Double bassist David Desimpelaere on aspects of bass fingering

Reviews

Your monthly critical round-up of performances, recordings and publications

CONCERTS

Berlin

Antoine Tamestit: championing Widmann

ANTOINE TAMESTIT (VIOLA)
BERLIN PHILHARMONIC/DANIEL HARDING
PHILHARMONIE 20 JANUARY 2024

Tailor-made for Antoine Tamestit, Jörg Widmann's Viola Concerto takes into account not just his musical persona but also his considerable thespian gifts, the soloist being required to wander about the stage following a detailed mapping printed in the score. First sitting inconspicuously near the harps, the soloist starts by gently tapping on the viola's body and eventually plucking its strings (shades of Berio's *Naturale*), before 'finding' a bow that opens up a new world: swishing sounds redolent of Sciarrino lead to some *flautando* effects on the C string, first joined by the bass flute, then by the clarinets in Middle Eastern modus. An encounter with the double bass section turns into a scary experience, but the violist is now exploring the whole range of the fingerboard in virtuosic runs and passages of double stops, humming along and finally letting out a primeval scream of frustration. All ends well, however, with the viola soaring above the muted strings in a concluding section of aching lyricism.

Tamestit has performed Widmann's concerto some 40 times since premiering it in 2015, roughly half of them with Daniel Harding conducting. Theirs is the art that conceals art: you could readily believe that the piece is being created in real time before your eyes and ears, and the aplomb with which Tamestit delivered Widmann's unconventional writing defied criticism. It also inspired his confrères in the Berlin Phil, who rounded off the concert with an impressive traversal of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony.

CARLOS MARÍA SOLARE

FREDERIKE VAN DER STRAETEN

THIS MONTH'S RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS
Our pick of the new releases

A Birthday celebration from the **Bozzini Quartet**
PAGE 81

Mendelssohn in song from **Michael Barenboim**
PAGE 82

A Lionel Tertis homage from young star **Timothy Ridout**
PAGE 87

To browse through more than a decade of *The Strad*'s recording reviews, visit **www.thestrad.com/reviews**

New York

HILARY HAHN (VIOLIN) NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC/JAKUB HRŮŠA

DAVID GEFFEN HALL 12 JANUARY 2024

The passion of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Ballade* for orchestra was expertly controlled and shaped by Jakub Hrůša with the New York Philharmonic, its mix of lyricism and rhythmic energy perfectly setting the stage for Hilary Hahn's account of Prokofiev's Concerto no.1. The opening Andantino was elegant and refined – Hahn unafraid to play as softly as she liked. Her passagework had vivacity and flair without sacrificing sound quality; double-stops were like a caged animal – wild but contained. The virtuosic Scherzo found Hahn playing even the most difficult, quiet or harsh passages with unparalleled delight. She brought a beautiful simplicity to the opening of the Moderato and the final run sequences appeared effortless as she made her way up and down the fingerboard and across all four strings with grace and poise, ending with tremendous sophistication.

Her solo Bach encore – the Andante from the A minor Sonata – was so captivating that I hardly dared move; the audience was spellbound until the ending of the very last note (which she held with complete control for what seemed like an eternity). Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* rounded out the programme and was fantastically well played by all sections of the orchestra.

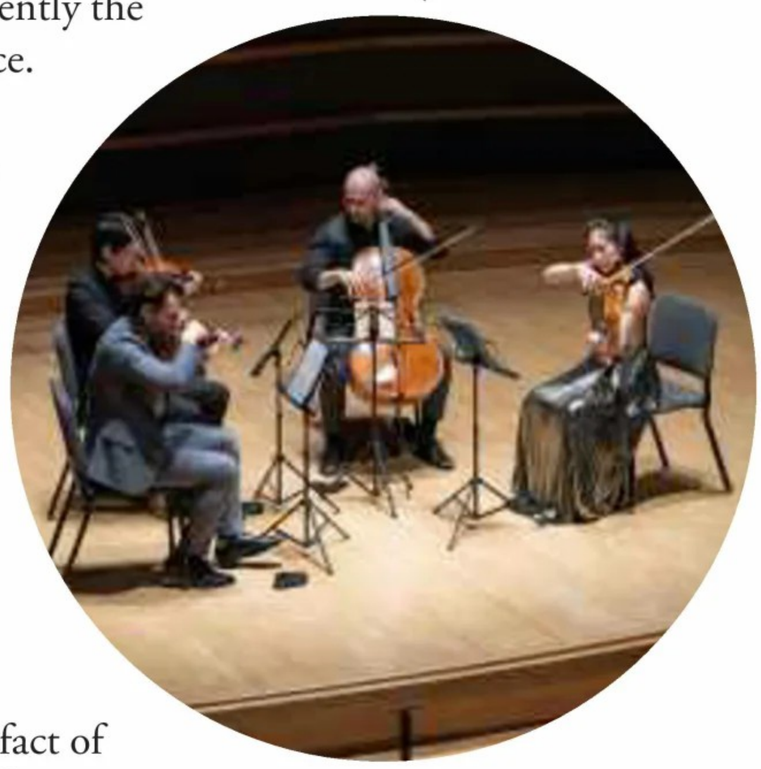
LEAH HOLLINGSWORTH

Philadelphia

DOVER QUARTET

PERELMAN THEATER 14 JANUARY 2024

I first heard this formidable group live at the Americas Society in New York in 2014, shortly after it had won the Grand Prize in the Banff International String Quartet Competition. Its unique Viennese suavity has stuck with me for the past decade and anticipation was high for a second outing. This appearance in the intimate Perelman Theater for a capacity crowd did not disappoint. The cheering began when cellist Camden Shaw mentioned the group's Philadelphia roots: all four musicians – including violinists Joel Link and Bryan Lee, as well as violist Julianne Lee – are graduates of the Curtis Institute, and currently the school's ensemble-in-residence.



Thrills from the Dover Quartet

The group opened with Haydn's Quartet in G minor op.74, no.3, 'Rider', done with sparkle and refinement, along with intonation that would be the envy of any ensemble. Then the cellist offered a brief background on Florence Price's Quartet in G major (1929), of which two memorable movements survive. As an invaluable artefact of the early 20th century, it confirms Price's status in the American firmament.

But it was Shostakovich's String Quartet no.9 that was the climax of the afternoon. In a tense half hour, it shows the composer's piercing mix of seriousness and manic intensity at its peak. The final movement was particularly memorable, the foursome escalating the pace in a breathtaking race to the finish.

BRUCE HODGES

GOLDMUND QUARTET

PERELMAN THEATER 16 JANUARY 2024

Why aren't works by Schulhoff programmed more often? That question lingered in the air, after the Goldmund Quartet offered a ferocious reading of his *Five Pieces* (from 1924). Structured as a set of irreverent dance homages – a waltz, a serenade, a Czech folk tune, a tango and a tarantella – the whole made a strong impression in the lithe hands of this estimable ensemble, making its Philadelphia debut. The musicians use four instruments once owned by Nicolò Paganini, courtesy of the Nippon Music Foundation: any quartet would be ecstatic to have such a piece of history at their fingertips.

A memorable debut from the Goldmund Quartet

In an illuminating pre-concert talk, Zev Kane (programme director of WRTI in

DOVER PHOTO ALEX BROWN. GOLDMUND PHOTO GREGOR HOHENBERG

Philadelphia) mentioned that Haydn likely influenced Schumann's Third Quartet in A major, written amid a flurry of activity. So Haydn's 'Fifths' Quartet (in D minor op.76 no.2) provided a textbook introduction to his talented successor. Its 20 minutes were filled with the prolific title interval ringing sweetly: when those 5ths are precisely executed, that consonant buzz is oh so satisfying.

Following this preface, the Schumann that ended the evening gained even greater resonance. The Goldmund players positioned the poetic third movement as the apex – the climax of a sensuous evolution buoyed by the group's (again) pristine intonation and immaculately calculated bowing, among other virtues. The dotted rhythms in the finale were so well drilled that I was thinking about them for days afterwards.

BRUCE HODGES

London

RANDALL GOOSBY (VIOLIN) JAMEEL MARTIN (VIOLA/NARRATOR) EDDIE POGOSSIAN (CELLO) ZHU WANG (PIANO)

PURCELL ROOM 14 JANUARY 2024

At the end of this programme – titled 'Intersections: Black Music & Words' – Randall Goosby remarked to the audience with some pride and not a little relief that he hadn't known how it would turn out. He needn't have worried, thanks in no small part to his naturally poised playing, propelled by a sweet and rich tone.

The concert, around 80 minutes without an interval, interweaved words and music from Black writers and composers, with Randall informally addressing the audience. Viola player and writer Jameel Martin lent his rich bass voice in readings of his own texts before each of the five numbers selected from the *Negro Melodies* by Coleridge-Taylor (originally for solo piano and arranged for piano trio).

Randall Goosby: embracing experimentation

The Movement for string trio by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson brought a more modern idiom, its metrical tricks – described by Goosby as 'rhythmic mischief' – smoothly negotiated, and the work's spareness in places imbued with great intensity.

For André Previn's Four Songs for soprano, cello and piano (the soprano line arranged for violin), it probably wasn't necessary both to precede each song with a reading of Toni Morrison's text and to have the soprano part projected on the back wall, but the expression ranged from bleak to wistful to sublime. A crowd-pleaser to end – *Air on a G String* – ensured the audience went away happy.

EDWARD BHESANIA

CASTALIAN QUARTET

WIGMORE HALL 16 JANUARY 2024

The Castalian Quartet began with Janáček's First Quartet, the 'Kreutzer Sonata', with an almost recitative-like quality from cellist Steffan Morris at the opening, vehement utterances from violist Edgar Francis and some rich G-string playing from leader Sini Simonen. There were vivid contrasts and violent clashes of colour in the second movement and in the third a discomfiting attack of sul ponticello tremolo interruptions that seemed to come from a later musical era. Simonen played with anguished muscularity and super-heated vibrato in the finale and Francis all but quarried out some of his phrases.

The two movements of Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Awake*, commissioned by the Castalian, has long-breathed lines, which were beautifully sustained and paced. There are sudden agitated outbursts in the first, and the second is laced with restless anxiety before its questioning, unresolved final chord.

The opening Allegro of Bartók's Fifth Quartet was ferocious, full of dogged determination, leavened by some light, fluid playing. The Adagio was poised and delicate, and there was a feeling of fun in the Scherzo, thanks to the changeability of the initial quaver passages and the touches of rustic dance. Emotional intensity steadily increased through the Andante, and the finale combined superb ensemble playing with the personalities of individual voices.

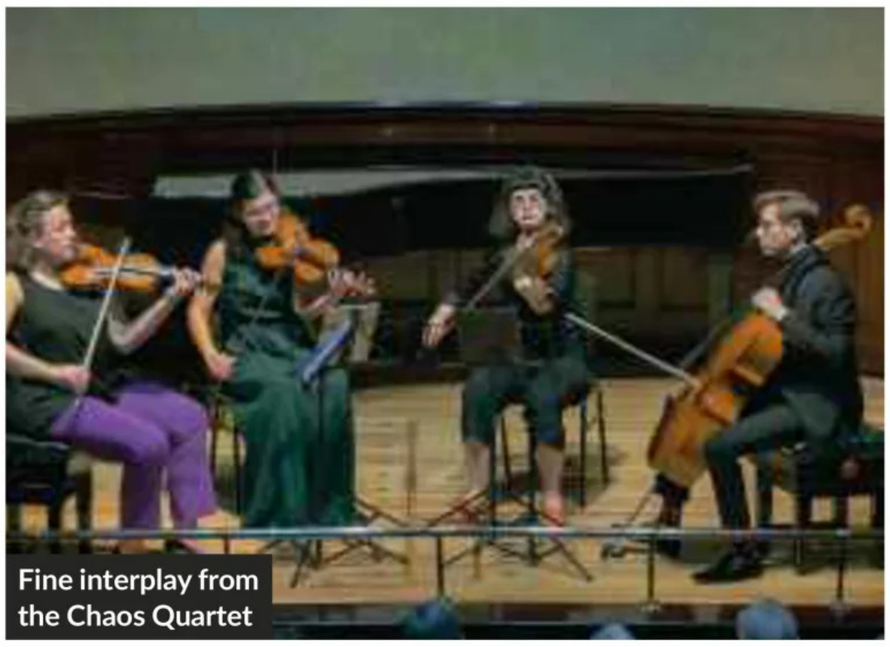
TIM HOMFRAY

CHAOS QUARTET

WIGMORE HALL 19 JANUARY 2024

The opening of Mozart's B flat Quartet K589 was gentle and smooth in this account by the Chaos

KAUPO KIKKAS


Fine interplay from the Chaos Quartet

Quartet, with cellist Bas Jongen playing his solo with attractive nonchalance. The development was full-blooded, with nimble playing from leader Susanne Schäffer. The Larghetto flowed gracefully, with more nicely shaped melodies from Jongen (this was written for King Wilhelm II of Prussia, himself an enthusiastic cellist) and some neat little dialogues between the musicians. The inner parts provided the Menuetto with energy, and brought palpable enjoyment to the dancing opening of the Trio. After its clipped, skipping start, the finale became smooth and creamy, with some moments of mystery along the way.

Berg's *Lyric Suite* came as something of a musical wrench, but had similar beauty of tone, vitality and textural clarity. The first movement was full of incidental details, and the second had a tinge of melancholy, with delicate playing and time seemingly suspended. There was firm direction through the spectral busyness of the Allegro misterioso, and the fourth movement was appassionato indeed until the magical, quiet lines at its centre. The Presto delirando had violent, disjointed intensity, with some fierce bowing before the tragic, vibrato-laden soliloquies of the final Largo desolato.

TIM HOMFRAY

VILDE FRANG (VIOLIN) BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/SAKARI ORAMO

BARBICAN HALL 20 JANUARY 2024

Vilde Frang recorded Stravinsky's Violin Concerto a few years ago, and her rebarbative way with the opening Toccata continues to throw down the gauntlet to her accompanists. She led Oramo and the BBCSO on a not-so-merry dance, pulling the pulse about and having no truck with the potentially Neoclassical elements of Stravinsky's 1931 writing.

By springing into the first Aria with hardly less ferocity, Frang kept up a similar level of intensity. On the one hand, her approach made individual sense as an adaptation of the conventional concerto form; on the other, it continued to look forward to the Stravinsky of *Agon* while finding unlikely common ground with Schoenberg's concerto of five years later.

The finale offered not so much catharsis as Cubism, flattening out the usual thematic contrasts while using some unusual accents to turn up singular perspectives on the heterogenous nature of Stravinsky's inspiration for the violin writing: a stamping Russian folk song here, a clackety Spanish rhythm there, a virtuoso flourish from the Corelli-Paganini handbook and a Chablis-dry aside. More harum-scarum coordination, more scampering to keep up; Frang kept everyone – audience and orchestra alike – on the edge of their seats. She is a force of nature.

PETER QUANTRILL

LINOS PIANO TRIO

KINGS PLACE 21 JANUARY 2024

The Linos Piano Trio opened the London Chamber Music Society's first concert of the new year *à deux*, with cellist and pianist playing three of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words*, including op.109 (originally for cello and piano, the other two being arrangements of the solo piano pieces).

Cellist Vladimir Waltham's tone was not resplendent, perhaps due to his instrument, but his playing was by turns songful and impassioned. Pianist Prach Boondiskulchok came into prominence in Fanny Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in D minor, driving the collective turbulence of the first movement with a vivid, gothic-like quality.

Boondiskulchok's own Piano Trio no. 2 received its London premiere. Subtitled 'Song without Words', it takes cues from his Thai heritage. The first movement features the microtonal chants of Northern Thai monks heard at a retreat, the second a staccato recitative on the piano, the third the resonant sounds of gamelan and some violin/cello hocketing and cello percussion. This final movement seemed more sprawling, but the sounds overall were often ravishing.

The bold first movement of Beethoven's 'Ghost' Trio prompted spontaneous applause and in the second movement the piano gently shone through the fragile, subdued strings.

The encore was another 'song without words' – Schubert's 'Ständchen', with the novelty of all three players taking turns at the keyboard.

EDWARD BHESANIA

WIGMORE HALL TRUST 2024

Reviews

RECORDINGS

BACH Violin Concertos: A minor BWV1041, E major BWV1042, D minor BWV1052R, G minor BWV1056R; Suite No.3 BWV1068: Air

Leonidas Kavakos (violin)

Apollon Ensemble

SONY CLASSICAL 0196588689321

A violin superstar brings perhaps too much personality to the Baroque

Leonidas Kavakos's accounts of these provoke a mixture of positive and negative reactions. His technical athleticism, lightly articulated bow-strokes, clinical precision, pliancy and rhetorical spontaneity acknowledge period-performance practices to good effect; and he adds drama a-plenty, especially in the darkly intense opening Allegro of the D minor and his numerous rhetorical flourishes in the Presto of the G minor. His communication and musical affinity with the one-per-part Apollon Ensemble also ensure tautly controlled performances, transparent textures and a rare unanimity of sound and purpose, cleanly captured by Sony's engineers.

Regrettably, Kavakos allows his extrovert virtuosity to consume him. He adopts breakneck speeds for many of the fast movements, especially the finale of the A minor Concerto, in which demisemiquavers fly by without really registering. By contrast, his indulgently slow tempo in the E major's Adagio and the excessively delayed resolution on the pause on the dominant chord towards its mid-point are almost yawn-inducing. His approach to extempore embellishment, too, often seems misguided, notably when he adds intrusive ornamentation into Bach's already florid melodic lines, as in the central movements of BWV1041 and 1042 and in some fast movements. The Apollon contributes to this ornamental revelry, too, especially in BWV1042; and Kavakos's flamboyant cadential flourishes in the opening Allegro and central Adagio of the D minor and the G minor's finale also seem somewhat idiosyncratic.

ROBIN STOWELL

BACH Sonatas for keyboard and violin BWV1014–19

Sirkka-Liisa Kaakinen-Pilch (violin)

Tuija Hakkila (fortepiano)

ONDINE ODE1446-2D

Impeccable if emotionally restrained readings of masterly sonatas

Although Bach wrote these sonatas for violin and harpsichord, it is quite possible that they were played on a fortepiano in his lifetime. Bach was not initially keen when Gottfried Silbermann showed him his first attempts at the instrument, but by 1747 he reacted positively to the improvements that had been made.

This recording by two Finnish early-music specialists keeps an impeccable balance between the three contrapuntal lines. The sweet tones of Kaakinen-Pilch's 1691 Rogeri violin sing out in the church acoustic and the use of a fortepiano (by Silbermann) means both instruments can temper their dynamics. I did sometimes yearn for the harpsichord's crispness, but soon acclimatised to the more legato sound created by struck rather than plucked strings.

Some might find the playing rather reserved. In the slow movements with which Bach opened the first five sonatas, Kaakinen-Pilch uses the lightest of expressive brush strokes, uncompromisingly non-vibrato and with only the slightest right-hand pressure to add emotion. At its best the music speaks for itself, however, the long notes beautiful in their plainness.

Several of the fast movements feel rather flat and overly academic but happily those in the Sixth Sonata in G major bounce along infectiously, its opening Allegro taken at an energetic pace and its gigue-like final movement leaping and trilling with humour and style.

JANET BANKS

BEETHOVEN String Quartets: in C sharp minor op.131, in A minor op.132

Léner Quartet

BIDDULPH 85042-2

Fiery late Beethoven from this crack Hungarian ensemble

Most ensembles take around ten years to find what I call their fifth voice; but the Léner Quartet achieved it in half that time. Its musicians were Leó Weiner's first successes as a chamber music coach and in 1924, when these recordings were made, their Beethoven still had freshness as well as six years' experience.

The most homogeneous group on record, its players came from the Hubay–Popper stable in Budapest. Imre Hartmann was a terrific cellist, Sándor Róth a fine violist, the two violinists Jenő Léner and József Smilovits like peas in a pod. As for their portamento, bring it on, I say!

Op.131, set down over two days in February, with one side remade in August, holds together well: the fugue invites the listener in, the variations maintain the attention and the Adagio quasi un poco andante is very moving, leading to a lively but never brutal finale.

To browse through more than a decade of *The Strad*'s recording reviews, visit **www.thestrad.com/reviews**

This recording of op.132, made on two November days, is crucial to Aldous Huxley's novel *Point Counter Point* – Biddulph reproduces the relevant passage in the booklet.

After the Innigkeit of the opening, the Allegro has terrific impetus, unimpeded by a certain amount of Hungarian ebb and flow; the Scherzo has typical Léner flair and its droning Trio has a lovely quality; the chorales of the 'Heiliger Dankgesang' build great intensity and the interludes have a hopeful spring in their step; the march is just fine; and after the satirical cadenza, the finale brings wondrous rhythm and drive, with an exhilarating dash to the finish.

Yes, the Busch recordings have a sublimity and spirituality that are not quite attained here, but what flair and intensity can do, the Léners do. The acoustic sound breathes a unique atmosphere.

TULLY POTTER

BRAHMS Cello Sonatas: no.1 in E minor; no.2 in F major **SCHUMANN** Fünf Stücke im Volkston

Christian Poltéra (cello)

Ronald Brautigam (piano)

BIS BIS-2427 (SACD)

Searing performances from two consummate storytellers

Brahms's two cello sonatas come from opposite ends of his career and represent a sea change in his approach to the genre. The First, in three movements, has no real slow movement, but opens in a state of lyrical unease. The Second bears a hymn-like slow movement of considerable poignance and replaces the intermezzo-like Allegretto of the First with a scherzo marked passionato. Christian Poltéra and Ronald Brautigam are acutely responsive to Brahms's invention throughout, locating unerringly the inner force that drives them along, never lingering to admire the beauty to be found within them.

The Bozzini Quartet celebrates a composerly collaboration

Not that these performances are without beauty of their own. Poltéra fully exploits the woody resonance of his 1711 'Mara' Stradivari, unafraid to sing as the solo line rises above the stave, but with a special emphasis on the baritonal gruffness to be found in the lower register. Brautigam plays a copy by Paul McNulty of an 1868 Streicher, with its softer attack and slightly attenuated dynamic range. The opening of the Second Sonata is impetuous to say the least, but in this reading there is a contrasting lightness of touch in the gnomic central movement of the First and an imaginative variety of phrasing that prevents its closing fugue from becoming clotted.

In between comes a performance of Schumann's *Five Pieces in Folk Style* in which Poltéra and Brautigam both show themselves to be vivid storytellers, setting the seal on a deeply involving album.

DAVID THREASHER

FREY String Quartet no.4

Bozzini Quartet

COLLECTION QB CQB2432

A long-standing musical friendship is celebrated

Swiss composer Jürg Frey – who turned 70 last year – has had a long association with the Montreal-based new-music specialists, the Bozzini Quartet, writing three quartets for it across a span of 20 years. That closeness and mutual understanding is more than evident in the Bozzini's sensitive, thoughtful account of his hour-long, five-movement Fourth Quartet from 2020.

It's a remarkable piece: sparse, reflective, often just a step away from silence, and sounding as though classical gestures have been boiled down to their bare bones, ready for close inspection and contemplation. The Bozzini treads an expert path between almost mechanistic consistency across Frey's sometimes barely changing musical ideas, while playing up subtle distinctions of light and shade, consonance and dissonance. Indeed, Frey makes more than a few nods to traditional quartet

MICHAEL SLOBODIAN

writing in the piece – for example in the second movement's folk-like drones and ornamentations, and its rich minor-mode triads, which sound shocking after so much dissonance and so many unconventional sounds. The Bozzini embraces the breadth of Frey's language with such conviction – and, it has to be said, such stamina and sustained intensity across his lengthy paragraphs – that the results are never less than persuasive.

It's a work that repays close listening and reflection, and Frey could hardly have hoped for a performance of greater insight.

DAVID KETTLE

KORNGOLD String Sextet in D major op.10 **TCHAIKOVSKY** Souvenir de Florence

Nash Ensemble

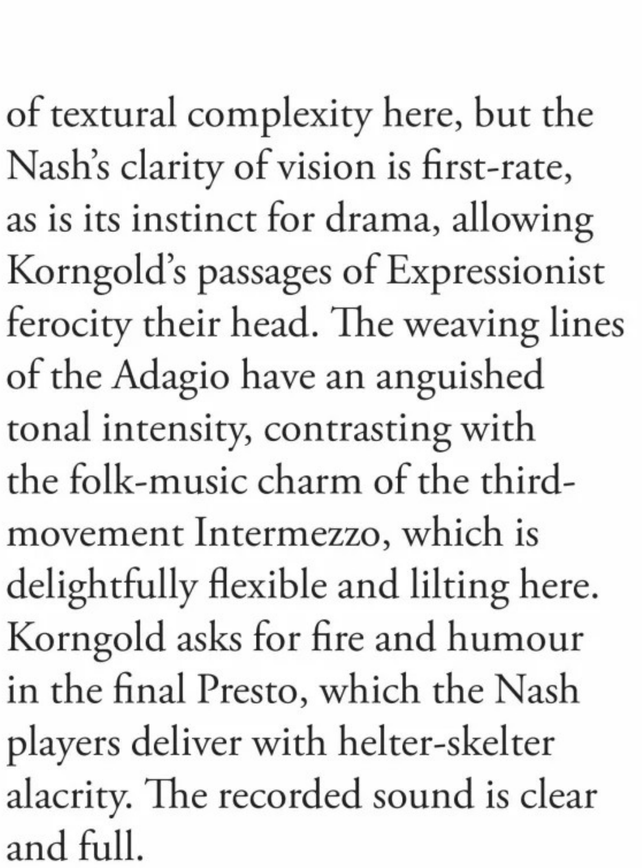
HYPERION CDA68406

Korngold is the star on this characterful album

The Nash Ensemble launches into Tchaikovsky's string sextet *Souvenir de Florence* with drive and energy, rich sound and opulent vibrato. In the second-movement Adagio cantabile violinist Stephanie Gonley and cellist Adrian Brendel play their beautiful duet with supple beauty, relaxed and warm yet firmly paced, and they all skitter splendidly through the saltando section of the following Allegretto moderato. There are moments of lightness in the finale, with its fugal counterpoint neatly done. This is playing that combines beauty and character, and if it's a little heavy at times, that's down to the composer.

Korngold was still a teenage wunderkind when he wrote his Sextet during the First World War; his deployment of forces is, frankly, more inventive and varied than Tchaikovsky's. There's a fair degree of textural complexity here, but the Nash's clarity of vision is first-rate, as is its instinct for drama, allowing Korngold's passages of Expressionist ferocity their head. The weaving lines of the Adagio have an anguished tonal intensity, contrasting with the folk-music charm of the third-movement Intermezzo, which is delightfully flexible and lilting here. Korngold asks for fire and humour in the final Presto, which the Nash players deliver with helter-skelter alacrity. The recorded sound is clear and full.

TIM HOMFRAY



Michael Barenboin and Natalia Pegarkova-Barenboim delight in Mendelssohn

MENDELSSOHN Songs without Words (arr. David)

Michael Barenboim (violin) Natalia Pegarkova-Barenboim (piano)

LINN CKD696

Empathetic arrangements and warm musicianship make this a must-hear

These arrangements may be counted almost as authentic as the piano originals. Ferdinand David was not merely the intended soloist for Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto: he effectively wrote the first-movement cadenza and gave the overall shape of the part its unimprovable polish. 'His tone is most pure,' remarked an English reviewer of David in 1839, 'his cantabile expressive, his intonation perfect and his bowing such as all English players should endeavour to imitate.'

The same could justly be said of Michael Barenboim. His portamento is stylistically apt, not self-consciously antique but intrinsically vocal. His tempos take account of the intimately domestic context for which Mendelssohn was writing, neither pushing Presto movements to virtuosic extremes nor burdening Andantes with anachronistic pathos. The core of his tone is warmed with a youthfully light vibrato, and (crucially) his phrasing lifts the up-beat without an ugly accent in sight. The pianist is inevitably allotted an unrewardingly subsidiary role, weighted towards the left hand, but Natalia Pegarkova-Barenboim makes the best of it with a properly equal place in front of the microphone.

The booklet note does not elaborate on whether David arranged all of the *Songs without Words* – it seems unlikely – but this selection cherry-picks from all seven books, in a chronological arrangement that gives the lie to the old myth that Mendelssohn never developed. The open-hearted exuberance of op.19 no.2 belongs to the world of the Octet just as surely as the Andante sostenuto op.85 no.3 shares the distilled inner feeling of the slow movements in the Sixth Quartet and Second Symphony. Programming, performance, engineering: every facet of this album is a delight.

PETER QUANTRILL

VIRVERA PHOTOGRAPHY.

FANTASY

MESSIAEN Fantaisie **SCHUBERT** Fantasy in C major **SCHUMANN** Märchenbilder op.113 **STRAVINSKY** Le baiser de la fée – Divertimento

Alena Baeva (violin)
Vadym Kholodenko (piano)

ALPHA ALPHA1021

Flights of fancy aplenty on this delightful disc

Messiaen's early Fantaisie (1933) has yet to outgrow our familiarity with its ideas as they appear in the later *Quartet for the End of Time*, but Baeva and Kholodenko bring it to life as a fully fledged work. Unlike several previous recordings, they follow the expression marking rather than the metronome for the passionate second subject, imparting much stronger coherence and energy to the whole with a mastery of Messiaen's method of episodic juxtaposition. The recording plays its part, too, in underlining the pianist's articulated attack and the palette of the violinist's tone.

Baeva is Kyrgyz-born, Kholodenko Ukrainian, and they bring the kind of valedictory sensibility to Schubert's late Fantasy that emerges in the work of post-Soviet composers such as Sylvestrov and Korndorf. The Fantasy stands with the E flat Mass as one of the most underappreciated products of the composer's last year; a prelapsarian, Classical elegance shot through with Romantic angst is the essence of late Schubert in performance: holding these elements in balance is again a compelling virtue of this husband-and-wife duo at work.

Both Schumann and Stravinsky evoke lost fairy-tale worlds, and Baeva bestows on each of them a freshness never tainted by anachronism, especially effective in the dewy-eyed awakening of the *Märchenbilder*. Highly rewarding.

PETER QUANTRILL

AMERICAN COUNTERPOINTS

PERKINSON Louisiana Blues Strut: A Cakewalk; Sinfonietta no.1 **PERRY** Prelude for Strings; Symphony in One Movement for Violas and Basses; Ye, Who Seek the Truth; Violin Concerto **STEWART** We Who Seek

Curtis Stewart (violin) Experiential Orchestra/James Blachly

BRIGHT SHINY THINGS BSTC-0200

Two unduly neglected figures are brought back into the spotlight

It's not often you can claim a CD offers true revelations, but that's the case with this fascinating release featuring US violinist and composer Curtis Stewart. The real discovery is the 1968 Violin Concerto by African-American composer Julia Perry, respected during her lifetime, but seldom encountered in concert programmes today. Stewart's compelling and quietly authoritative account of the concerto should encourage a far wider interest: it's a strange, deeply idiosyncratic piece, from its fierce, improvisatory solo opening to a finale that sounds like Magnus Lindberg, the violin often embedded deeply within Perry's imaginative orchestral textures only to break free for a final, breathless cadenza. Stewart gets persuasive support from the Experiential Orchestra under James Blachly, alive to Perry's restlessly flickering colours. Her 1961 *Symphony in One Movement for Violas and Basses* is just as burnished and brooding as its title suggests, in a richly imagined account from the Experiential players, and she subverts a lush, Romantic language with sly harmonic sidesteps in the sumptuous Prelude for Strings.

Stewart opens with a gutsy, freewheeling *Louisiana Blues Strut* by the marginally better-known Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, another shamefully overlooked 20th-century African-American composer, though the Experiential players could have done with a slightly crisper attack in his intricate, driven Sinfonietta no.1, lively and vigorous though their performance is. Nonetheless, it's a disc of musical discoveries, conveyed in compelling performances and warm, close sound.

DAVID KETTLE

THE PASSENGER

SCHUBERT Piano Trio no.2 in E flat major **WEINBERG** Piano Trio in A minor

Trio con Brio Copenhagen

ORCHID CLASSICS ORC100282

Music that speaks of trauma is eloquently brought to life

A hue of melancholy drifts across both Schubert's E flat major Trio, written a year before his death, and the Weinberg, composed in 1945 immediately following World War II. Given the latter's traumatic experience of having fled Nazi-occupied Poland, the sense of loss and a certain numbness are paramount elements in this work. But in addition, a steely-grey anger infuses the first movement. The finely honed Trio con Brio evokes a brutal edge to its energised and inflamed playing, ferociously aggressive in the Toccata, with the unpredictable piano low notes savagely punctuating the invention – a sensation enhanced by a slightly metallic recorded sound. Weinberg's style has a linear structure, and this element, in both the first movement and the third-movement Poem with its extended piano cadenza, could perhaps be more sculpted, (as found in Gidon Kremer's fine recording on DG).

Schubert's Trio no.2 encompasses both the elements of the searching wanderer and moments of hope and optimism. The Trio con Brio's Scherzo is full of vitality and the final

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STAY IN THE KNOW

Allegro has a lovely elegance; but the tempo adopted for the Andante is on the swift side and misses the trudging sense of despair achieved by some other performances.

JOANNE TALBOT

A ROOM OF HER OWN

SMYTH Trio in D minor **BOULANGER** D'un matin de printemps; D'un soir triste **CHAMINADE** Trio no.1 **TAILLEFERRE** Trio

Neave Trio

CHANDOS CHAN20238

More magnificent byways brought to life by an adventurous trio

All of these works deserve a place in the repertoire in their own right, the gender of their composers irrelevant, save for the fact that they all – in different ways – faced difficult receptions of their output. Smyth's Trio, for example, was only aired in public for the first time in 1985, more than a century after it was written. Yet it's a major discovery demonstrating incredible fluency and memorable melodic invention, albeit owing much to Brahms.

Naturally the case for all four composers is strengthened by these illustrious performances: the Neave Trio delivers perceptively characterised interpretations that are by turns individual and blended, supported by a pleasingly warm recording.

Germaine Tailleferre began her Trio when she was 24, but only completed the work 60 years later in 1978. Miraculously, she interweaves her later thoughts with the earlier ideas to create a thoroughly convincing work teeming with delicately coloured, piquant Fauré-esque harmonies, qualities that are exquisitely projected in this performance. Chaminade's Trio is full of subtle shades of timbral colour, elegant and nuanced phrasing adding

to its beauty. There is more astringency to Lili Boulanger's music and fervent readings brings alive its compellingly intense darker resonances, with *D'un soir triste* perhaps the highlight of the disc.

JOANNE TALBOT

DIAVOLO

TARTINI Violin Sonatas: op.1 nos. 1, 6 and 7; 26 Sonatas: nos.6 and 9; in G minor 'The Devil's Trill'

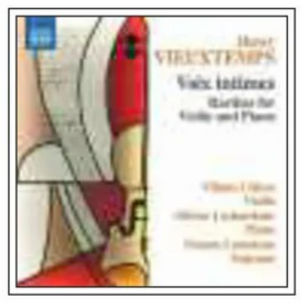
La Serenissima/Adrian Chandler (violin)

SIGNUM CLASSICS SIGCD781

Plenty to impress in this devilishly difficult music

Adrian Chandler and La Serenissima offer a representative selection of Tartini's violin sonatas from the collection variously published as op.1, along with two 'sonate piccole' from a collection of 26. Chandler's sonorous tone, expressive embellishment and varied bowing styles allow him a rhythmic and lyrical freedom that highlights the primacy of cantabile melody in these works, as in his beautiful rendition of the Grave of the D major Sonata op.1 no.6. He also demonstrates commendable technical dexterity, adeptly overcoming Tartini's challenging double and multiple stoppings with apparent ease. His demonic account of 'The Devil's Trill' builds to heights of passion in its Larghetto affettuoso and he thoroughly masters the high-voltage Allegros' groups of frenzied trills, sometimes resorting to more modern methods of attack. His continuo team provides imaginative support, but the resonant, strikingly up front recording severely limits the listener's perception of dynamic differentiation.

Chandler varies the instrumentation for the two piccolo sonatas, using the optional cello accompaniment for no.9 but



Vilmos Csikos: virtuosity and charm

performing no.6 unaccompanied, as Tartini originally intended. He plays no.9's opening movement with commendable lyrical freedom, adding a modicum of additional ornamentation to its already florid style; and he revels in that sonata's other three dance-influenced movements and no.6's robust Giga, with its folksy drones, unisons and harmonic clashes, again resorting occasionally to non-historical bowing techniques.

ROBIN STOWELL

VOIX INTIMES

VIEUXTEMPS Rarities for violin and piano

Vilmos Csikos (violin) Olivier Lechardeur (piano) Manon Lamaison (soprano)

NAXOS 8.579149

An invitation to step inside this charmingly stylish salon

There is a lot of rare Vieuxtemps here, but then most Vieuxtemps *is* rare. This is all good fun, much of it, but not all, for showing off. The opening *Souvenir d'amitié* with its simple, natural flow, is a warm-up for the *Duo brilliant en forme de fantasie*

sur des airs hongrois where the pyrotechnics really begin: Csikos and pianist Lechardeur tackle the virtuoso spectacle with élan.

The seven short works that make up *Voix intimes* are not for showing off, although they offer plenty of technical challenges, being salon pieces with a tendency to develop into high drama along the way. In one of the longest, 'Douleurs', the violinist shows an essential simplicity below its multiple embellishments and curlicues. 'Deception' seems an aptly unsettling tale, with ominous semiquavers nagging at its heart.

The *Variations on a Theme from Beethoven's Romance no.1* are pleasingly inventive caprices. The *Elegie* – originally for viola – possesses not only passionate melody, with lots of ornamental passagework, but also left-hand passagework in the keyboard part. If you're listening to the album in a single sitting the *Marche funèbre* might seem a little samey. But the concluding *Fantasie* for voice, violin and orchestra (here for piano) has delightful duetting between Csikos and soprano Manon Lamaison. The recording is clear and close.

TIM HOMFRAY

ARCHE

Routes Quartet

ROUTES RECORDS RQCD0002

A far-reaching new take on Scottish trad is an irresistible listen

Don't be fooled. The Glasgow-based Routes Quartet might look like a conventional string quartet, but it's anything but. For a start, it has two fiddlers instead of violinists, and its self-penned repertoire gleefully hurls together trad, jazz, improvisation and plenty more – plus a good dose of classical elegance and precision too. Most importantly, it does it all extremely well, with masses of passion and personality, and a gloriously natural, warm sense of ensemble.

Ignore the cod-profound Ancient Greek titling throughout this second album: taken just on musical terms, it's a compelling journey through light and shade, the epic and the intimate, from the sophisticated switchback mood shifts of fiddler Madeleine Stewart's *Not Again* to co-fiddler David Lombardi's reedy, bagpipe-like solo in his own luminous *The Letter*. Cellist Rufus Huggan showcases his supple bass-line skills in his own bluesy *Charlie's*, while violist Emma Tomlinson conjures a stomping tune like something out of a West End musical in Andrew Waite's *Unnecessary Noises.*

The fingerprints of new trad luminary Greg Lawson as co-producer are all over Arche's sometimes club-like waves of euphoria, but it's a cleverly constructed creation, too, full of intricate textures that draw on the players' technical prowess. Altogether, a joyful listen, captured in close, rich sound.

DAVID KETTLE

PATH TO THE MOON

Cello sonatas by **Britten, Debussy and Walker;** transcriptions of **Boulanger, Britten, Fauré, Korngold, Simone** and **Takemitsu**

Laura van der Heijden (cello) Jâms Coleman (piano)

CHANDOS CHAN20274

Fine musicianship can't quite overcome a flawed programme concept

The spectrum of composers listed above speaks for itself. Over the course of 80 minutes, van der Heijden and Coleman draw together an eclectic list of 20th-century melodists in order to 'invoke the exploratory nature of humankind's voyage to the moon'.

The concept is held together by connections as tenuous as Britten's sonata being composed within two years of the Soviets crashing a spaceship into the moon. The song transcriptions would likely stand out more distinctively from each other in a recital context, whereas here they become soft tissue around the sonata-bones of the album.

Where the juxtaposition works best is a Michelangelo setting of Britten serving as the introduction to his sonata. In each case, both van der Heijden and Coleman are considerably more expansive than the composer and his partners, but they capture something quintessentially Britten-esque in the halted and muted progress of the sonata's opening Dialogue, the gossipy hints dropped by the pizzicato Scherzo and the listless rumination of the Elegy.

Debussy's late Cello Sonata trades more subtly still in the language of things left unsaid, and van der Heijden teases out all manner of shadows and apparitions in the Scherzo with the closest co-operation of Coleman. That album's main event, though, is a combative, big-boned sonata by George Walker. The piece recognisably inhabits the world of 1957 and van der Heijden rises to its considerable technical challenges, making the most persuasive case for its revival.

PETER QUANTRILL

FAIRY TALES

Works by **Bull, Frolov, Halvorsen, Kreisler, Madsen, Medtner, Viken** and **Zimbalist**

Elisabeth Turmo (violin, Hardanger fiddle) Elena Toponogova (piano)

QUARTZ QTZ2157

Plenty of musicality but perhaps a lack of virtuoso pizzazz

There's a sense of otherworldly contemplation to this debut disc from Norwegian violinist Elisabeth Turmo and Russian-born pianist Elena Toponogova, something that feels particularly fitting for the release's theme of magic and myth. Indeed, Turmo delivers especially sensitive, sometimes touchingly fragile accounts of the opening collection of music from her homeland: she's alive to the idiosyncratic twists and turns of Ole Bull's *A Mountain Vision*, for example, in a spirited but unshowy performance, and points up the folk inspirations behind Halvorsen's First Norwegian Dance in a bright performance full of captivating detail – and one that looks ahead to her four supple, flowing, expressively ornamented solo pieces for Hardanger fiddle (Halvorsen's devilish *Fanitullen*, in particular, works itself into quite a frenzy).

But if there's a sense of care and restraint that breathes fresh life into these Norwegian works, it works less persuasively in the four pieces from pianist Toponogova's birth country that close the disc. The musicians are never less than fluent in these virtuoso arrangements by Kreisler, Zimbalist and Frolov of tunes from Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* and *Le coq d'or*, and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess,* but with their unhurried unfolding and rather cool restraint, the accounts end up rather better-behaved than their arrangers probably intended. Even if the disc concludes with charm rather than spectacle, however, it provides an enjoyable survey of some little-heard repertoire.

DAVID KETTLE

A LIONEL TERTIS CELEBRATION

Works by **Beethoven, Bridge, Bowen, Brahms, Clarke, Coates, Fauré, Forsyth, Ireland, Kreisler, Mendelssohn, Reed, Schumann, Tertis, Vaughan Williams** and **Wolstenholme**

MILES PERRY

Heady music making from Timothy Ridout and James Baillieu

Timothy Ridout (viola) Frank Dupree, James Baillieu (piano)

HARMONIA MUNDI HMM905376/77 (2 CDS)

A viola legend is celebrated by a star of a new generation

Every viola player in the world has good reason to celebrate the life and work of Lionel Tertis, that indefatigable pioneer of the instrument who enlarged its repertoire as few others have. Few, however, have such a direct connection with the great man as Timothy Ridout, a Royal Academy of Music alumnus whose lineage goes back to Tertis himself, who taught there twelve decades ago. More importantly, Ridout obviously has a feel for the music from the Edwardian era which forms the core of this album. Tully Potter's erudite notes are an indispensable aid for charting Tertis's relationships with the composers who wrote for him. Therein he takes the potentially perilous course of continually referring the listener to pioneering recordings of these pieces made by the likes of Tertis and William Primrose; but Ridout not only stands his ground in this illustrious company but belongs truly in the line of great viola virtuosos.

If space allowed, I could spend much time pointing out the countless felicities that distinguish Ridout's playing: the ringing double-stops adorning Mendelssohn's *Sweet Remembrance* and Schumann's Romance, the pointed spiccato and sonorous chord playing of Kreisler's Pugnani pastiche, the sustained pianissimos in Ireland's *The Holy Boy* or Tertis's own *Sunset*. Ridout has obviously taken note of Tertis's style as preserved in the aforementioned recordings, but has made it his own: his generously applied portamento never draws attention to itself, while his beautiful vibrato is addictive. His pianistic collaborators come into their own in the two large-scale pieces that bookend the album: Frank Dupree tackles the virtuoso writing of Bowen's First Sonata with aplomb and James Baillieu finds beautiful colours for Clarke's impressionistic Sonata. I can't recommend this warmly recorded set too highly, and hope that many sequels will be forthcoming.

CARLOS MARÍA SOLARE

Collaborations: Reflections on 50 Years of Working with Composers
Irvine Arditti

520PP ISBN 9783795726126

SCHOTT MUSIC £34

Known for having commissioned, performed, and recorded some of the most challenging music for strings during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Irvine Arditti has never done things by half measures.

This is also the case with his new book, *Collaborations*. At over five hundred pages long and densely packed with interpretative insights, analysis, reflections, quotes and anecdotes, *Collaborations* is part autobiography, part compendium of extended string techniques, part instructional textbook on contemporary performance practice methods and partly a historical overview of the post-1945 avant-garde movement.

However, as its title suggests, *Collaborations* is mainly about the nature of human relationships in the act of music making. This point is emphasised by Arditti throughout. Having performed over a thousand works as soloist and leader of his eponymous quartet, Arditti and the Ardittis have benefited from the direct contact with the composers themselves.

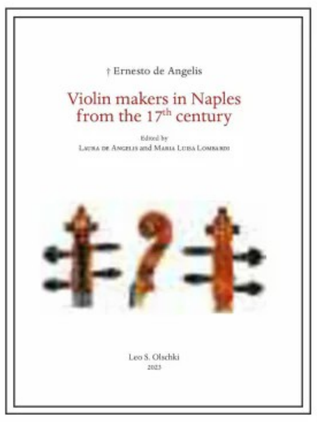
These have varied from occasionally tetchy and difficult affairs (Kagel, Berio) to positive relationships that developed into lifelong friendships (Harvey, Rihm, Dillon). Arditti describes how some composers could be 'hands-off' in rehearsal, noting that working with the enigmatic Giacinto Scelsi was 'like being involved in a religious ceremony'. For composers like György Kurtag, the process was far more 'hands on', with rehearsals going on for hours on end.

Some composers would submit scores for newly commissioned works with days or weeks to spare, while the final pages from others would hastily arrive on the morning of the premiere, the ink still wet on the page. Most importantly, all these experiences influenced the final outcome, both in terms of the composer's own input into the collaborative process and Arditti's ability to harness often supremely difficult physical, technical, aesthetic and philosophical challenges associated with performing these works into richly rewarding artistic results.

Given the nature of the music in question, it perhaps comes as no surprise to readers that passages detailing intricate mathematical time calculations are sometimes difficult to follow, such as when summarising Brian Ferneyhough's *Dum Transisset II*: 'we must think of the bar in four with a faster tempo, 93/3.5 x 4 = 106.285714'. (Most musicians' metronomes do not extend to quite that number of decimal points.)

Nevertheless, Arditti presents this repertoire for the most part in a surprisingly direct, accessible and readable style. As light relief from the passages containing dense analytical prose, some amusing stories are also recounted, such as the violinist sharing a sauna with Xenakis, Henze answering his door in a dressing gown, Nono adding salt to his tea in a London café instead of sugar (and then continuing to drink it), Ferneyhough insisting that the quartet should rehearse the silences between the movements in his String Quartet no.3, Rihm's 'phobia' for avoiding metronome markings, and Arditti's violin almost being confiscated by the Communist authorities at Moscow airport in 1995.

Irvine Arditti (*seated*) with his eponymous quartet in 1982



For string players, the main takeout in the book may well be Arditti's often exhaustive explanations of what may be called 'extended string techniques.' These include fingernail pizzicatos, battuto, frappe col legno (a fast battuto with the wood of the bow), ricochet, jeté, spiccatos, balzato-type gestures, tabla (hitting the body of the instrument with the palm or the fingers), particular types of bridge sounds, flautando molto tasto, gettatini (a continuous gettato bow), spazzolare ('a fast windshield-wiper movement of the bow on the fingerboard between the tasto and sul ponticello areas'), in addition to various types of glissando, microtonality, irrational rhythmic patterns, poly-temporality and so on.

It's all described in meticulous detail, alongside several scans from scores, with some of them usefully containing Arditti's own pencil annotations. Any string player aspiring to explore this repertoire would do well to read the violinist's own detailed and illuminating performance instructions before rehearsing a note of the music.

As with any memoir, there is a sense in which Arditti's narrative reads like a snapshot of what now feels like a bygone era, where white male composers dominated the world of contemporary music, and artistic merit was judged according to criteria based on complexity, virtuosity, cleverness, sophistication and abstraction.

Some will no doubt note the glaring absence of gender and racial diversity within these pages. Of the 25 composers featured in each chapter, 21 of those are white male Europeans/Americans (by my reckoning, at least), while the only female composer represented in the entire collection is the violinist's wife, Hilda Paredes.

Arditti is careful not to wade too much into broader ideological issues concerning cultural, racial and gender-based ramifications associated with this repertoire, some of which have been addressed by other performers of the so-called 'new complexity' movement, but the absence of female composers such as Liza Lim, Alwynne Pritchard, Chaya Czernowin and Rebecca Saunders will be viewed as a disappointing omission by some, especially since the Arditti Quartet has performed and recorded music by three of these composers.

Nevertheless, *Collaborations* is without doubt a valuable book for anyone interested in the modern classical music of the past 50 years, providing essential reading for string players specialising in avant-garde repertoire, and offering an indispensable companion to Arditti and Robert H.P. Platz's co-authored book on the techniques of contemporary violin playing, published by Bärenreiter in 2012.

PWYLL AP SIÔN

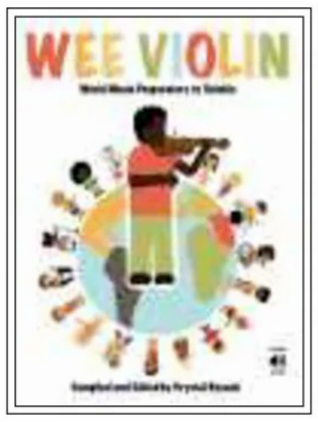
Violin Makers in Naples from the 17th Century
Ernesto de Angelis

82PP ISBN 9788822268686
CASA EDITRICE LEO S. OLSCHKI €25

It is 15 years since Ernesto de Angelis's book on the Neapolitan luthiers first appeared, and it is still the only volume available on the subject. Now it has been translated into English, and a wider audience can appreciate the scholarship of this devotee of the Neapolitan making traditions.

De Angelis (1943–2001) was a doctor, biologist and 'amateur violin maker', as he liked to call himself. He spent much of his life researching the lives and instruments of the Neapolitan makers, and after his death the notes he made and his collection of instrument photos were collected together and edited into a book. It is divided into three parts: an introduction to the history of violin making in Naples and notes on the distinguishing characteristics of the Neapolitan making school; biographical information on around 50 luthiers of the 19th and early 20th centuries; and finally, a photographic record of 38 representative instruments by the various makers. For each instrument (27 violins, 6 violas, 4 cellos and 1 double bass), the date is given as well as its principal dimensions and details of the label. All the photos were taken by the author, often while he was restoring the instrument at his workbench. Consequently, the whole book has a sense of authority, as De Angelis is clearly writing with a broad hands-on knowledge of the Neapolitan makers and their traditions.

The first section is probably the most useful to today's makers, as it includes a summary of the main characteristics of the 'Neapolitan school of lutherie'. De Angelis summarises the most important ones at the end of the chapter: 'the heavy thickness of the tables, the protruding points, the rather flat back, the scroll with its protruding first volute and the lower placement



of the eye, the nearly vertical positioning of the f-holes, the thin purfling [and] the transparent oil varnish, yellow–brown or red–brown'. There are many more, and his descriptions are often colourful: 'the lower bouts are rather flat at the bottom, giving the impression of a "sitting" instrument', and 'the first volute is more protruding so the scroll appears to have ears'. De Angelis's biographies of the various makers are also filled with commentary that suggests he knew them personally: for instance, we learn that Giuseppe Cappiello (1922–92) was 'known to offer lunch to anyone who went to see him for minor violin repairs or just to see his violins'. The lively prose style makes this volume one of the most enjoyable books on lutherie I have recently read.

It is odd, then, that among so much first-hand scholarship, De Angelis tells us on page 4 that Alessandro Gagliano 'was a student of Antonio Stradivari', even though 18 pages later he backtracks and says he was 'a possible pupil of Stradivari', but two pages after that, that he 'worked about 30 years in the Stradivari workshop'. There are also some odd translations ('People says that Pistucci is also know to letting play his just finished violins to poor people') but these are minor quibbles about a book that will prove very valuable for luthiers, scholars and researchers into the making traditions of southern Italy's largest city.

CHRISTIAN LLOYD

Violin made by Ernesto de Angelis in 1999

COURTESY MARIA LOMBARDI

Wee Violin: World Music Preparatory to Twinkle
Crystal Boyack

62PP ISBN 9798987401200
INDEPENDENT $19.99

Wee Violin presents a kaleidoscope of songs from around the world, and uses them thoughtfully and creatively to help the beginner violinist establish a solid technique. Suzuki teachers and learners are the target audience for this book, as playing skills are built in tiny increments, all heading towards the end goal of enabling the young player to master the *Twinkle* variations that are the bedrock of the Suzuki repertoire. While the songs themselves use a variety of keys and rhythm patterns, the student is only required to join in on the E and A strings, using the main bowing variations found in Suzuki Book 1. The teaching point for each song is clearly stated below its title and the notes for teachers are informative. Audio versions of every song can be downloaded via a QR code.

The book as a whole seems to exude positivity – everything from the friendly vibe of the illustrations to the helpful teaching notes contributes to an overarching sense of joy and encouragement. The songs are presented respectfully, mostly using original words in their original language, with occasional tweaking to fit the song's specific teaching purpose within the context of the book. There are some instances where the use of the Suzuki rhythms feels a little forced, and there are a few small typos and missing time signatures, but these do not detract from the book's overall effect or the clever way in which it guides the young player, almost by stealth, in a joyful journey towards successfully playing their first set of *Twinkle* variations.

It feels important to mention that two potentially problematic songs, *Dancing Josie* and *Canoe Song* are included in the book. These are familiar songs which have been used and loved by music educators over the years, particularly those from Kodály-inspired teaching traditions, but both have been named in the list of 'Songs with a Questionable Past' issued by Lauren McDougle, director of the American Kodály Institute. There is of course no suggestion that the author had anything but positive pedagogical motives for including these songs in the book, but given the information now available about the background of those two particular songs, it could be that she might choose to substitute them in future editions.

In short, this is a delightful and very useful book. The author's evident joy in her teaching shines through effortlessly.

CELIA COBB

Classifieds

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ADVERTISERS' INDEX

ACCESSORIES

Corene ™ 60

ETS M Thorvaldsson 96

KUN 2

Musafia Italia SNC . . 27

Peter Mach 91

Petz Vienna 17

Schilbach 91

Stradpet 60

Touchstone Tonewoods 91

Vann Bowed Instruments Ltd . . . 91

CONCERT

Academy of St Martin in the Fields 30

DEALERS

Bishop Instrument & Bows 9

Chaconne Co. Ltd 17

Hieronymus Kostler 28

Remenyi House of Music 17

Robertson & Sons Violin Shop 95

Stentor Music Company Ltd 60

EXHIBITION

Celebrating Women Luthiers 30

MAKERS

Arcus / Bernd Müsing 6

Affourtit Historical Bows 91

J Michael Fischer Violin Shop 28

John Norwood 91

Luis & Clark 28

Matthieu Besseling 48

RECORDS

Chandos Records 84

STRINGS

Larsen Strings 15

Pirastro GmbH 74

Thomastik Infeld 03

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120 YEARS AGO

From the ARCHIVE

FROM THE STRAD APRIL 1904 VOL.14 NO.168

New York correspondent Thomas C. Dawson reports on a performance by Maud Powell and solves a mystery regarding the violins of virtuoso Ede Reményi (1828–98)

MISS MAUD POWELL made her reappearance before the American public at the fourth Philharmonic Concert on the occasion of Mr. Wood's most satisfactory introduction to the devotees of Tschaikovsky at Carnegie Hall. Miss Maud Powell chose as her *pièce de resistance* Saint-Saëns's Concerto, popularised largely by M. Thibaud.

One of the points that is sometimes made about this lady's playing is "that she plays like a man" (whatever that means). Personally, I like a woman to play the violin like a woman, just as I like to see a woman dress and act as such! There is at the present time a plethora of male performers, and a first rate lady violinist comes as a welcome change when we get the real article. I was disappointed in Miss Powell's rendering of this interesting work. Her intonation in the first movement was by no means impeccable (to use an expression I am getting heartily tired of,) there was also a want of repose and a certain "scratchiness" that one does not look for in a performer of her calibre. The violin that Miss Powell used handicapped her. In these days of the survival of the fittest, a violinist to keep his or her head above water must have a fine, large and pure toned instrument, it matters not if "made in Germany" or Cremona. I see that Miss Powell is advertised as playing on a Guarneri. Well Guarneris have their ups and downs! It may be on account of faulty adjustment.

"I happened in" (as Americans say) at Mr. Victor S. Flechter's atelier in Union Square the other day, to have a chat with this world-renowned connoisseur and dealer. A fine Lupot was brought out for my inspection. "How does this compare with Mr. Remenyi's Lupot?" I asked. "This is a finer instrument, both in tone and period," replied Mr. Flechter. "There is a popular impression that Remenyi used and preferred his Lupot to any violin in his possession," I suggested. "That is not so," replied the expert, "his finest violin was the Stradivari he possessed, and which he purchased from me some years ago." Mr. Flechter is corroborated by the son-in-law of the late Mr. Remenyi, who told me that his father-in-law possessed two Stradivaris – the Titan and the Princess, and that the latter was the deceased virtuoso's special favourite.
THOMAS C. DAWSON ●

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE

María Dueñas
The string world's latest star discuss recording Gabriela Ortiz's new violin concerto with the LA Phil under Gustavo Dudamel

Manchester Collective
We talk to Rakhi Singh, co-founder of the innovative UK group, about its latest cross-genre projects

The makers of Ferrara
New analysis and archival research into luthiers including Alessandro Mezzadri and the Marconcini family

Francesco Geminiani
How the 18th-century Italian violinist's scale method sheds light on the playing conventions of his time

Decorating a bow frog
A method for adding decorative inlay in the style of 19th-century maker Christian Wilhelm Knopf

PLUS

Postcard from Detroit
The 2024 Sphinx Competition

+ The Strad Degrees 2024–25
The complete guide to courses at conservatoires and music schools

Sentimental *Work*

ELENA URIOSTE

The Violin Sonata by French composer Mel Bonis was a revelation for the US-born violinist, revealing both a new sound world and innovative techniques in music writing

The 1914 Violin Sonata by Mel Bonis (1858–1937) is one of the hidden gems of the violin and piano repertoire. It's an intoxicating work, full of sumptuous waves of emotion and romance. Audiences seem to respond to it in a visceral way, and it's written beautifully for the violin: there are some tricky technical odds and ends, but it allows you to soar, fly and whisper with the instrument. It's a physically as well as emotionally satisfying piece to play – perhaps especially so for me as I've learnt it alongside my husband, pianist Tom Poster.

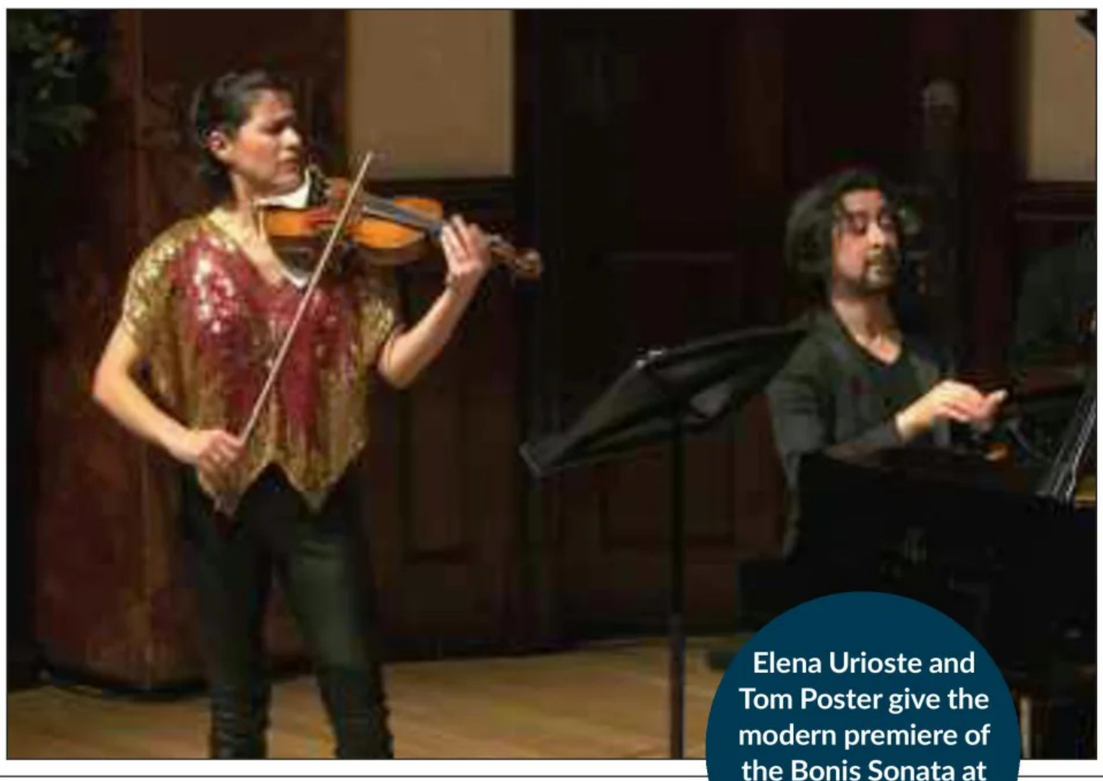
I think the first time I heard the piece was actually the first time I read through it! Tom and I were keen to make a disc of French sonatas, but wanted to think outside the handful that have been played and recorded so many times before. We've always been drawn to French music in general, and I've loved exploring the shimmering, transparent sound worlds that you find in impressionist works. Tom discovered the catalogue of Mel Bonis in one of his late-night research binges, and as soon as we happened upon her violin sonata in four movements, we got hold of the music and dived right in. We were bowled over by the lusciousness of the harmonic language, as well as its myriad twists and turns. Tom and I both felt an immediate connection to the music, which was written in a language that we felt we could inhabit quite naturally.

The emotional centrepiece of the work comes in the third movement. The theme is based on a Greek folk tune, of which elements appear throughout the work but here it's concentrated into a kind of slow lament. It then transitions into an incredibly delicate, intimate reverie, although the material never stays in one place for too long – as though Bonis can never be comfortable in one state of being for any length of time. Perhaps this reflects her own internal conflict: she was forced into an arranged marriage to a businessman who didn't especially like music, and had to suppress her own need to create it. I think that any musician would agree that music is not just what you do; it's who you are, and in this piece you often feel as though Bonis's creativity is flooding out unconstrained. It's as if the music embodies the different elements of her heart.

When we began studying the score, it was apparent that some of it was written in an unusual way. In the fourth movement, the bar-lines are dotted rather than solid, as though she wanted to give a suggestion of time rather than something more rigid. I actually love this – in chamber music rehearsals we often talk about eliminating bar-lines, singing through them where possible to give a feeling of timelessness. For us, this last movement was a kind of puzzle, allowing us to work out where the phrases should go without the constraint of time signatures or obvious punctuation marks. It also brought up a lot of discussion about how much we are influenced by the way a piece looks on the printed page.

I think this sonata is just one example of the treasure trove of repertoire that's just waiting to be rediscovered. All it takes is a bit of digging, patience and open-mindedness on the part of the player. So I'd encourage everyone not just to play the same few warhorses, but to be an explorer and invite people to hear a new story they haven't encountered before. Who knows what riches you might find!

INTERVIEW BY CHRISTIAN LLOYD



Elena Urioste and Tom Poster give the modern premiere of the Bonis Sonata at Wigmore Hall in January 2023

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